HEMMING, THE ADVENTURER

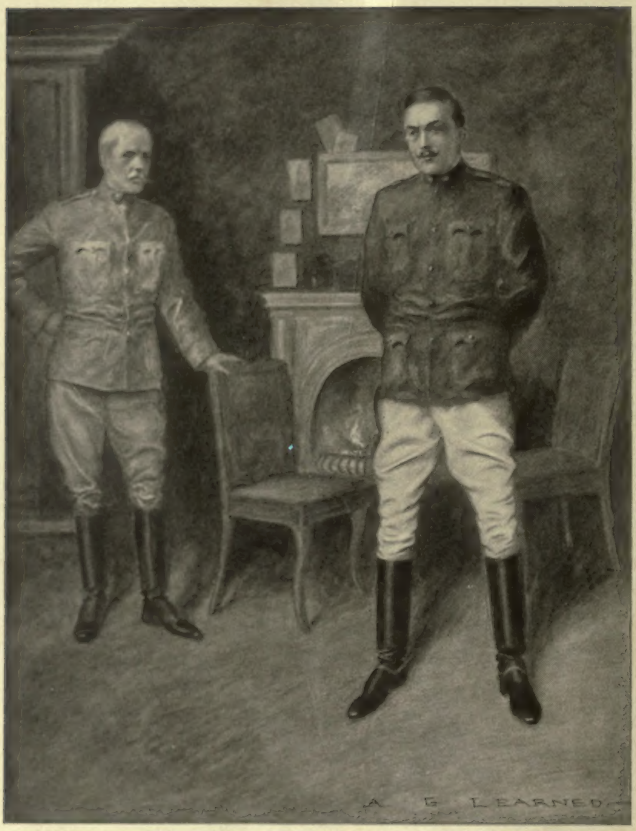




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HEMMING, THE ADVENTURER



"'I INTEND RESIGNING MY COMMISSION, SIR'"

(*See page 15*)

Hemming, The Adventurer

By

Theodore Roberts

Illustrated by A. G. Learned



Boston • L. C. Page & Company • *Mdccccciv*

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A Dedication

TO ONE WHO BROUGHT
THE COLOUR OF REALITY BACK
TO LIFE AT A TIME WHEN LIFE WAS LIKE
A PICTURE, AND THE FACES OF MY FRIENDS WERE
LESS REAL THAN THE FACES OF MY DREAMING. TO ONE
WHOSE SWEET INTEREST IN MY STORIES MADE IT SEEM WORTH
WHILE TO RECALL MY AIMLESS ADVENTURES. TO ONE WHOSE
GENTLE MINISTRATIONS TURNED A WEARY SICKNESS INTO A
HOLIDAY, AND WIPED OUT THE MEMORY OF PAST PAIN. TO ONE
WHO TAUGHT ME THAT ROMANCE LIES NOT ALL IN THE MAKING
OF NEW LANDFALLS AND THE SIGHTING OF NEW MOUN-
TAIN-TOPS. TO HER WHO READS THIS PAGE WITH
UNDERSTANDING, AND A QUICKENING OF
THE PULSE, THIS STORY OF HEMMING
THE ADVENTURER IS LOV-
INGLY DEDICATED

1903 T. R.

CONTENTS

PART ONE

CHAPTER		PAGE
I.	Captain Hemming Faces a Change of Life	13
II.	Hemming Meets with a Strange Reception	21
III.	Hemming Visits the Manager of the Syndicate	32
IV.	The Advent of Mr. O'Rourke and His Servant	44
V.	The Adventurers Dispense with Mr. Nunez	55
VI.	Hemming Hears of the Villain	63
VII.	An Elderly Champion	71
VIII.	Hemming Undertakes a Dignified Work	81
IX.	O'Rourke Tells a Sad Story	92
X.	Lieutenant Ellis Is Concerned	105
XI.	Hemming Draws His Back Pay	114

PART TWO

I.	The Unsuspected City	123
II.	The Sporting President	134
III.	The Post of Honour.—The Secretary's Affair	139
IV.	The Thing That Happened	147
V.	Chance in Pernambuco	155

CHAPTER		PAGE
VI.	Cuddlehead Decides on an Adventure	166
VII.	Hemming Learns Something about His Army	170
VIII.	Captain Santosa Visits His Superior Officer	178
IX.	Mr. Cuddlehead Arrives	186
X.	The First Shot	195
XI.	The Colonel's Ultimatum	205
XII.	O'Rourke to the Rescue	215
XIII.	The Unexpected Sailor	226
XIV.	The Attack	233
XV.	Rest in Pernambuco	242

PART THREE

I.	The Real Girl	247
II.	A New Restlessness	258
III.	A Rolling Stone	264
IV.	"The Dear, Dear Witchery of Song"	273
V.	An Uncanny Guest	279
VI.	The Bachelor Uncle to the Rescue	286
VII.	Hemming Receives His Sailing Orders from a Master Not to Be Denied	302
VIII.	Hemming Would Put His Dreams to the Proof	308
IX.	To Part No More	318
X.	A New Command	325

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

PAGE

"'I INTEND RESIGNING MY COMMISSION, SIR'" (*See page 15*) . . . . . *Frontispiece*

"SEVERAL DAYS LATER MISS TRAVERS WROTE TO HEMMING" 78

"THE DOOR CAME IN WITH A RENDING, SIDELONG FALL" 240

"'I HAVE DECIDED, SIR, TO STICK TO SCRIBBLING'" 277

"AT THAT MOMENT MOLLY TRIPPED INTO THE ROOM" 323

PART ONE

HEMMING, THE ADVENTURER

CHAPTER I.

CAPTAIN HEMMING FACES A CHANGE OF LIFE

THE colonel sat in Captain Hemming's room. He looked about at the snug furnishings, and the photographs above the chimney. Even the row of polished spurs on their rack against the wall, and the line of well-shone boots and shoes at the head of the bed, could not do away with the homelike air of the room.

"Even in Dublin, a man with something over his pay can make himself comfortable, in seven months," mused the colonel. Being a bachelor himself, he liked the way things were arranged. For instance, the small book-shelf above the bed, with its freight of well-thumbed volumes, tobacco-jar,

and match-box, appealed to him. He selected a cigarette from an open box at his elbow, and, lighting it, sighed contentedly. In reaching back to deposit the burnt match on an ash-tray, his hand upset a stack of folded papers and spilled them on the floor.

"The devil!" he exclaimed, and, doubling up, scooped for the nearest.

What's this, he wondered, as a yard or two of narrow, printed matter unrolled from his hand. He was a stranger to galley-proofs. He looked at the top of the upper strip, and saw, in heavy, black type, "The Colonel and the Lady." Then he settled back in the chair, crossed his thin, tight-clad legs, and smoothed the proof. Ten minutes later Hemming's orderly entered and mended the fire; but the colonel did not look up. The orderly retired. The clock on the chimneypiece ticked away the seconds all unheeded. The shadows lengthened at the windows, and at last the colonel straightened himself, and replaced the papers. He smiled.

"Sly old Hemming," he remarked, and laughed outright. "He shouldn't show us up like that," he said, "but it's a good yarn. Wonder if he will lend it to me to finish to-night?"

Just then Captain Hemming entered.

By this time the room was dusk with the twi-

light of early spring. He did not sight the colonel immediately, and, going over to a wardrobe, hung up his cap and greatcoat. He was in "undress" uniform — his blue serge tunic somewhat shabby, but his riding-breeches and high, spurred boots smart and new. The colonel coughed.

Though the captain's greeting was prompt and polite, it did not hide his surprise.

"I dropped in to speak about Tomilson — he seems in a bad way," the other explained. Tomilson was a full private — in both rank and condition.

Hemming advised leniency in this case. He had a soft heart for the men, in spite of his abrupt diction, and the uncompromising glare of his single eye-glass. When the commanding officer was about to take his departure, the captain asked him to wait a minute. His manner was as cool as ever.

"I intend resigning my commission, sir. I decided on the course some days ago, and meant to speak to you after parade to-morrow," he said.

"Bless me," exclaimed the colonel, "what the devil have you been up to?"

The other smiled, — a somewhat thin smile, — and replied that he had not disgraced the regiment, or done anything low. "But I'm down to my pay again," he exclaimed, "and I can't live on that."

"Why not? Have you ever tried?" inquired the colonel.

Hemming did not answer the question, but waited, with his hands behind his back, and his face toward the fast darkening windows.

"I'm sorry for it," said the older man, at last. "You are a good officer, — forgive my saying so, — and — and the mess swears by you. I hope you have suffered no serious misfortune."

The captain laughed wanly.

"It seems rather serious to me," he replied. "I've come to the end of my little pile."

"The second, I believe," remarked the colonel.

Hemming nodded.

"It beats me," exclaimed his superior, and looked as if an explanation would be welcome.

"You would understand, sir, if you were as big a fool as I have been. Good nature, without common business sense to guide it, gets away with more money than viciousness."

He stared gravely at the reclining colonel. "At last I have learned my lesson," he concluded, "and it is this — put not your trust in cads."

The colonel laughed uneasily, and quitted the room without asking for the loan of the proof-sheets. Hemming sat down in the vacated chair. His face now wore a pleasanter expression.

"Thank God, I'm not afraid of work," he said, "but may the devil fly away with that cad Penthouse. How can a blood-relation of Molly's be such a sneaking, mealy-mouthed little cur? Now, while I am lying here winged, thanks to my childish generosity and his beastliness, he is skipping around in London, on two months' leave. Herbert Hemming is done with the ways of lambs and idiots." Jumping to his feet, he went to the door and shouted for his man. A few minutes later, with the candles glowing softly on sword and photograph, spur and book-back, he dressed for dinner.

That night the mess found him more talkative than usual. But he left early, for his own quarters. The groups in the anteroom thinned gradually, as the men went about their various concerns, some to their rooms, and some to the town, and one across the square to the colonel's quarters, where the colonel's youngest sister awaited him. This sister was a thorn in the colonel's flesh. She would not let him smoke his pipe in the drawing-room (though he was sure *she* smoked cigarettes there), and he heartily hoped his junior major would marry her. The junior major hoped so too, and, with this hope in his breast, took his departure, leaving Spalding, a subaltern, and Major O'Grady alone by the piano.

O'Grady balanced his smouldering cigarette on

the edge of the music-stand, and strummed a few erratic bars.

"The other chaps must have suspected something," said Spalding. "I wondered why they all cleared out."

"What are ye doing here, ye impudent young divil? Should think ye'd skeedaddle down-town, now that Penthouse is in London, and ye've got a chance with the lady," cried the stout Irish major. The subaltern's boyish face took on an ugly expression.

"Penthouse — that bounder," he sneered.

"I must admit that his manners are a trifle airy," returned O'Grady, "but the same can be truly said of most subs of this glorious age."

"I'm not objecting to his manners, major, and I'm not defending my own," said Spalding. "I'm simply naming him a bounder."

O'Grady took up his cigarette, and turned his back on the keyboard.

"What are ye kicking about?" he inquired.

"Well," replied Spalding, anxiously examining the ceiling, "I happen to know things about him."

"Ye're a gossip, me boy, that's what ye are," cried the major, "and of all contemptible things, the worst is a male gossip. What do ye happen to know about him, me boy?"

A faint smile played across the lieutenant's upturned face; but the impatient major did not notice it.

"To begin with, he's some sort of cousin to a Miss Travers, an English girl whom Hemming is in love with," said Spalding.

"Then you object to him on purely social grounds," interrupted the Irishman.

"Oh, shut up, and let me tell my tale. Social grounds be shot — Miss Travers is daughter of a lord bish-hop. Penthouse is son of a baronet. What I'm getting at is that good old Hemming, just because this chap is related to his girl, has looked after him like a dry-nurse for more than a year. That is right enough. But — and this is not known by any one but me — Hemming backed a lot of his paper, and for the last two months he has been paying the piper. Once upon a time, in the memory of man, Hemming had some money, but I'll eat my helmet if he has any now."

"How d'ye know all this?" asked O'Grady, letting his fat cigarette smoulder its life away unheeded. Spalding touched his eyes lightly with his finger-tips.

"Saw," he said.

The major gave vent to his feelings in muttered

oaths, all the while keeping an observant eye upon his companion.

"I'll wager now that Hemming has some good old Irish blood in him," he remarked.

"Why do you think that?" asked Spalding, deliberately yawning.

"His generosity leads me to think so. There are other officers of infantry regiments who'd be better off to-day, but for their kind hearts and Irish blood." The major sighed windily as he made this statement.

"Methinks you mean Irish whiskey," retorted Spalding. With dignity O'Grady arose from the piano-stool.

"I'll not listen to any more of your low gossip," he said, and started for the door, in a hurry to carry the news to any one he might find at home.

"You needn't mention my name, sir," called Spalding, over his shoulder. His superior officer left the room without deigning a reply.

CHAPTER II.

HEMMING MEETS WITH A STRANGE RECEPTION

HERBERT HEMMING sat alone in his room, while his brother officers sought their pleasure in divers companies. His writing-table was drawn close to the fire. His scarlet mess-jacket made a vivid spot of colour, in the softly illuminated room. He was busily occupied with the proofs of "The Colonel and the Lady," when his man rapped at the door and entered.

"Nothing more," said the captain, without looking up. The soldier saluted, but did not go. Presently his master's attention was awakened by the uneasy creaking of his boots.

"Well, what do you want?"

"Me mother is very ill, sir."

"I'm not a doctor, Malloy."

"I wasn't thinkin' of insultin' you, sir."

Hemming sighed, and laid down his pen.

"I have found you a satisfactory servant," he said, "also a frightful liar."

"I must confess to you, sir," replied the man, "that I was lyin' last month about me father, — he's been dead as St. Pathrick this seven year, — but to-night I'm tellin' you the truth, sir, so help me — "

"Never mind that," interrupted Hemming.

Malloy was silent.

"So your mother is very ill?" continued the captain.

"Yes, sir, — locomotive attacks, sir."

"And poor, I take it?"

"Yes, sir, — four bob a week."

Hemming felt in his pockets and drew out a sovereign.

"Sorry it's so little," he said, "but if you give me her address to-morrow I'll call and see her."

"God bless you, sir," said the man. He took the money, and hesitated beside the table.

Hemming glanced at him inquiringly.

"Beggin' your pardon, sir, it beats me how you knows when I'm lyin' and when I'm tellin' the truth," exclaimed the orderly.

"I'm learning things by experience. Good night, Malloy."

Alone again, Hemming made short work of his proofs. After sealing them into a yellow envelope, and inscribing thereon the address of a big New

York weekly (whose editor had proved partial to his sketches and stories of "doings" in the Imperial Army), he produced some of the regimental stationery and began a letter to Miss Travers. It was no easy undertaking — the writing of this particular letter. After struggling for some minutes with the first sentence, he leaned back in his chair and fell into retrospection. His age was now twenty-nine years. He had done with Sandhurst at twenty-one, and had been in the army ever since; had seen more than his share of foreign service, and two seasons of border-scrapping in Northern India. He had gone ahead in his chosen profession, despite a weakness for reading poetry in bed and writing articles descriptive of people and things he knew. During his father's lifetime his allowance (though he was but a third son) was ample, and even enabled him to play polo, and shortly after his father's death an almost unknown great-aunt had left him a modest little sum — not much of a fortune, but a very comfortable possession. Two years previous to his present troubles he had fallen in love. So had the girl. A year ago he had proposed and been accepted. He had, for her sake, fathered a reckless, impecunious subaltern, by name Penthouse, lending him money and endorsing his notes, and now he was stripped bare to his pay. If he had never

met the girl, things would not look so bad, for certain papers and magazines had begun to buy his stories. By sitting up to it and working hard, he felt that he could make more as a writer than as a soldier. But the idea of giving up the girl sent a sickening chill through his heart. Surely she would understand, and cheer him up the new path. But it was with a heavy heart that he returned to the writing of the letter. Slowly, doggedly he went through with it, telling of his loss of fortune, through helping a person whom he would not name, and of his hopes and plans for the future. He told of the adventurous position he had accepted, but the day before, with an American Newspaper Syndicate — a billet that would necessitate his almost immediate departure for Greece. The pain of his disappointment crept, all unnoticed by him, into the style of his writing, and made the whole letter sound strained and unnatural.

By the time the letter was sealed and ready for the mail, Hemming was tired out. He flung himself on the bed, unhooked the collar of his mess-jacket (they hooked at the collar a few years ago), and, lighting his pipe, lay for some time in unhappy half-dreaming. He knew, for, at the last, young Penthouse had not been careful to hide his cloven foot, that he might just as well expect another great-

aunt to leave him another lump of money as to look for any reimbursement from the source of his misfortune. The fellow was bad, he mused, but just how bad his friends and the world must find out for themselves. Of course he would give Molly a hint to that effect, when he saw her. He had not done so in the letter, because it had been hard enough to write, without that.

Hemming went on duty next day, wearing, to the little world of the regiment, his usual alert and undisturbed expression. Shortly before noon he wrote and forwarded a formal resignation of his commission. By dinner-time the word that he had given up the service had reached every member of the mess. Spalding's story had also made the rounds, in one form or another (thanks to Major O'Grady, that righteous enemy to gossip), and the colonel alone was ignorant of it. During dinner little was said about Hemming's sudden move. All felt it more or less keenly; the colonel grieved over the loss of so capable an officer, and the others lamented the fact that a friend and a gentleman was forced to leave their mess because one cad happened to be a member of it. Hemming felt their quiet sympathy. Even the waiters tending him displayed an increased solicitousness.

Hemming remained in Dublin a week after re-

signing his commission. He had a good deal of business to attend to, and some important letters to receive — one from the American Syndicate, containing a check, and at least two from Miss Travers. It had been the lady's custom, ever since their engagement, to write him twice a week. Three were now overdue. The American letter came, with its terse and satisfactory typewritten instructions and narrow slip of perforated paper, but the English missive failed to put in an appearance. He tried not to worry during the day, and, being busy, succeeded fairly well, but at night, being defenceless, care visited him even in his dreams. Sometimes he saw the woman he loved lying ill — too ill to hold a pen. Sometimes he saw her with a new unsuspected look in her eyes, turning an indifferent face upon his supplications. He lost weight in those few days, and Spalding (who, with the others, thought his only trouble the loss of his money) said that but for the work he had in getting a fair price for his pony, his high-cart, and his extra pairs of riding-boots, he would have blown his brains out.

On his last night in Dublin his old regiment gave a dinner in his honour. Civilians were there, and officers from every branch of the service, and when Major O'Grady beheld Hemming (which did not happen until late in the dinner), clothed in the un-

accustomed black and white, with his medal with two clasps pinned on his coat, he tried to sing something about an Irish gentleman, and burst into tears.

"There's not a drop of the craychure in his blood," said Spalding, across the table.

"But he's the boy with the warm heart," whimpered the major.

"And the open hand," said the subaltern.

"The same has been the ruin of many of us," replied O'Grady.

It was well for Lieutenant Penthouse that he did not return to Dublin in time to attend that dinner.

Hemming knew a score of private houses in London where he would be welcome for a night or a month, but in his bitter mood he ignored the rights of friendship and went to a small hotel in an unfashionable part of the town. As soon as he had changed from his rough tweeds into more suitable attire, he started, in a cab, for the Travers house. The bishop was dead, and the widow, preferring London to Norfolk, spent every season in town. Hemming was sure of finding some one at home, though he trembled at the memory of his evil dreams. Upon reaching the house he dismissed the cab. The maid who opened the door recognized him, and showed him into the drawing-room.

"I hope every one is well," he said, pausing on the threshold.

"Yes, sir," replied the maid, looking surprised at the question. She had seen Captain Hemming many times, but never before had he addressed her.

It seemed to Hemming that he waited hours in the narrow, heavily furnished room. He could not sit still. At last he got to his feet, and, crossing to a corner table, examined the photographs of some people he knew. He wondered where his had gone to — the full-length portrait by Bettel, in field-uniform. He looked for it everywhere, an uncomfortable curiosity pricking him. Turning from his search, he saw Miss Travers watching him. He took a step toward her, and stopped short. Her face was white, her eyes were dark with the shadow of pain. Something had put out the familiar illumination that love had lighted so gloriously.

"Molly," whispered the man. His hands, extended at first sight of her, dropped impotently at his side. "For God's sake, what is the matter?" he cried. His honest gray eyes asked the question as plainly. Hers wavered, and looked beyond him in a pitiful, strained gaze.

"Why do you ask? You surely know," she said.

He could not speak for a moment. His brain, in

a whirl of apprehension, groped for some clue whereby it might find understanding.

"I know nothing," he said, at last, "save that I am horribly afraid of something I do not understand — of your silence and the change in you." He paused for a moment, scanning her averted face. "And now I am a poor man," he added.

At that a faint red stole into her cheeks. He drew nearer and laid a hand quickly and tenderly upon her shoulder.

"Dear girl, can that weigh against me?" he asked, scarce above his breath. She moved from his touch with a gesture that sent the blood ringing back to brain and heart. The madness of the righteous anger ebbed, leaving him cool and observant.

"I must beg your pardon for intruding, and now I shall go," he said. "It was well worth the loss of a few thousands of pounds — to find the real nature of your love."

He passed her with squared shoulders and sneering lip, and strode briskly toward the door.

"Wait," she cried, "I do not understand you." Her voice contained a new note.

He turned on the threshold and bowed.

"You have known me long enough," he said.

"Yes," she replied. He stood in the doorway and stared at her.

"If I am dreaming, then wake me, dear. Surely you love me?"

His voice was tense. He moved as if to approach her again.

"I have learned of your other life — of your living lie," she cried, weakly.

"My other life," he repeated, smiling gently.

"Yes," she said, "from my cousin. It was his duty. Tell me it is not true."

He saw the tears in her eyes. He marked the supplication in her voice. But he did not move from the threshold.

"From Penthouse?" he inquired.

She did not answer him. She stood with one hand raised to her breast, and a world of entreaty in her gaze.

"I thought," said Hemming, coldly, "that you loved me. I thought that when a woman loved the man who loves her, that she also trusted him. But I am very ignorant, considering my age."

He took his hat and stick from the rack in the hall, and let himself out of the front door. He stood for a few seconds on the steps and looked up and down the street. A cab rolled up to the curb. After drawing on his gloves and adjusting his monocle, he stepped into the cab and quietly gave the name of his club to the man behind.

The cab bowled along the quiet, respectable street.

"Stop here," cried Hemming, when they had reached the corner, and as the horse slid to a standstill he stepped out, and went up to a heavily dressed young man on the pavement. The stranger did not see him, and held on in the direction from which Hemming had just come.

"Excuse me — a word," said Hemming.

The other halted. His heavy, handsome face whitened under its unhealthy skin.

"Ah, how do, Hemming," he said.

Hemming took the extended hand. They stood about the same height. Hemming retained his grip of the other's hand.

"I am somewhat pressed for time," he said, "so you'll forgive me if I begin immediately."

He jerked Mr. Penthouse toward him with a downward wrench of his right arm, and, with his stick in his left hand, he administered a short and severe caning.

"I'm a-waitin' for you, guvnor," called the cabby.

Leaving Mr. Penthouse seated upon the pavement, dazed and blasphemous, Hemming returned to the cab and drove away.

CHAPTER III.

HEMMING VISITS THE MANAGER OF THE SYNDICATE

HEMMING's club was a favourite resort of military and naval men stationed near town, or home on leave. He met half a dozen whom he knew more or less intimately. All had something to say about his change of career, but presently he escaped them, and sought a quiet corner of the reading-room, where he could smoke and stare at the latest papers. Reading was out of the question. He might as well have tried to sing. Several times he was ready to leave the club and return to Miss Travers, but the memory of the movement she had made when he had touched her shoulder kept him crushed in his chair. He dined at the club, and drank more than was his custom. The sound wine brought colour back to his cheeks.

A youngster, who had been stationed in Halifax, Nova Scotia, for a year past, came over to his table with an American magazine in his hand.

"Do you know, old chap, your stories are quite the rage in Halifax," he said. "I notice, though, that the fellows here do not know what you are up to at all. One soon leaves the trick of reading the magazines on the other side."

This unexpected word for his literary work cheered Hemming considerably. He invited the youth to seat himself and have a cigar. Soon he found himself telling his admirer something of his aspirations.

When Anderson of the Royal Engineers came in, he found Hemming and the lieutenant on leave from Canada still talking across the table. Anderson was Hemming's senior by some four or five years, but they had been friends since childhood. After their greeting, Anderson said:

"Have you seen Penthouse?"

"Yes, I met him about five o'clock," replied Hemming.

Anderson's face brightened, and he slapped his knee with his broad hand.

"I ran across him in an apothecary's shop a few hours ago, and, as I had just heard of your arrival, I wondered if you had met him," he said. "You see," he continued, "I have had my eye on him of late. The Travers and I are still very good friends, you know."

"This sounds very interesting," broke in the lieutenant. "What is it all about?"

"I hardly know myself," answered Hemming.

The lieutenant wished them good night, shook hands cordially with both, and, after assuring Hemming that he would watch eagerly for everything he wrote, left the dining-room.

"Williams seems a good sort," remarked Hemming.

Anderson did not answer. He looked as if he were thinking unusually hard.

"I suppose you'll be in town for awhile," he said.

"I leave to-morrow for Greece. I'm a newspaper correspondent now," replied Hemming.

"You must stay a few days," said the engineer. "A few days will do it. You have no right to fly off the handle like that."

"Like what?" asked the other.

"My dear boy, I have known for a week just how it would be, and now I am in rather a hole myself," said Anderson.

"Have you been living a double life?" inquired Hemming, with a sneer.

"Great heavens!" exclaimed the lusty sapper, "do you mean to say? — but no, I only told the lady

that Penthouse was a rotten little liar. Strong language, I must admit."

Hemming laughed shortly.

"You must not trouble yourself too much, Dicky, for it's really not worth while," he said.

A little later Hemming excused himself to his friend on the plea that he had to return to his hotel, and write some letters.

"I am my own master no longer," he said.

"I think you are just beginning," replied Anderson, drily.

Hemming looked into the future, saw his body journeying, vagrant as the wind, and his hand at a hundred adventures, but never an hour of freedom. He went down the wide steps and into the street with hell and longing in his heart.

Hemming spent two weeks in Greece. He wrote a few descriptive stories for his syndicate, and then crossed into Turkey, where he was offered a commission. He wired that fighting was certain. The syndicate thought otherwise, and called him across the world to see or make trouble in South America. He cursed their stupidity and started, spending only a few hours in England, and taking ship in Liverpool for New York. Arriving in that city, he and his possessions (and he carried a full outfit) journeyed in a cab to an old and respectable hotel on

Broadway. The fare he had to pay opened his eyes. But what could he do beyond staring the cabby out of countenance with his baleful, glaring eye-glass? At the hotel, they were kind enough to take him for a duke in disguise. Next morning he found his way to the offices of the New York News Syndicate, in a high gray building on Fulton Street. He scrambled into one of the great caged elevators, close on the heels of a stout gentleman in a yellow spring overcoat and silk hat. The lift was lighted by several small electric bulbs. The air was warm, and heavy with the scent of stale cigarette smoke.

"New York News Syndicate," said Hemming to the attendant.

"Third floor," said the man, and up they shot and stopped. The iron grating was rolled back. Hemming stepped out into a cool, white-floored hall, and, turning, found the stout gentleman at his heels.

"I think you are Captain Hemming," said the stranger, "and I am quite sure I am Benjamin Dodder."

"Ah! the manager of the syndicate," exclaimed Hemming, waggling Mr. Dodder's extended hand, and looking keenly into his wide, clean-shaven face. Dodder was a much younger man than his figure

would lead one to suppose. Hemming thought his face far too heavy for his bright, good-natured brown eyes.

"I got in last night, and came 'round for orders," explained Hemming.

"That was good of you," replied the manager, looking gratified. He led the way through several large rooms, where clerks and stenographers were hard at work, to his private office. He paused at the door, and turning, said to a clerk with a glaring red necktie and beautifully parted hair: "Ask Mr. Wells to step into my room when he comes. Tell him Captain Herbert Hemming has arrived." A dozen keen, inquiring faces were lifted from desk and machine, and turned toward the new correspondent.

Within the manager's office were expensively upholstered chairs, leather-topped tables, polished bookcases, and half a dozen admirably chosen engravings, and above the grate many photographs, with signatures scrawled across them. The carpet underfoot was soft and thick.

"Try this chair, sir," invited Mr. Dodder.

Hemming sank into it, and balanced his hat and stick on his knees; Mr. Dodder snatched them from him and placed them on his table. Then he pulled off his coat and expanded his chest.

"Now I begin to feel like working," he remarked, with youthful gusto.

"What an extraordinary chap," thought Hemming.

Dodder opened a drawer in his table, and took out a box of cigars. Hemming recognized the label, and remembered that they cost, in London, three shillings apiece by the hundred.

"Have a smoke. They're not half bad," said the manager, extending the box.

The Englishman lit a weed, and felt that it was time to begin business.

"Why did you recall me from Greece?" he asked. "They are sure to stand up to Turkey, unless all signs fail."

This straightforward question seemed to catch the manager unawares. He rolled his cigar about between his white fingers, and crossed and uncrossed his legs several times before he answered.

"It's this way," he began, and paused to glance at the closed door. From the door his eyes turned to Hemming. "We believe as you do," he said, "but another man wanted the job. He left here three days ago."

As Hemming had nothing to say to that, Dodder continued: "The other chap has been with us five or six years, and, though he is a good writer, he

knows nothing of war. You were my choice, but Devlin happens to be Wells's brother-in-law. I was up against it all right, so I slid off as easy as I could."

"Thank you all the same," said Hemming. "Now tell me what you want done in South America."

"We want you to start in Yucatan," replied Dodder, "or somewhere along there, and travel, with a nigger or two, to any part of the country that promises copy. If you hear of a revolution anywhere, go hunt it out. Use the wire when you have news, but for the rest of it write good, full stories in your usual style. Why, captain, have you any idea how many newspapers, in this country and Canada, printed each of those stories of yours from Greece and Turkey?"

Hemming shook his head.

"Twenty-six, no less," said the manager. "I believe you would prove a paying investment if we marooned you on Anticosti," he added.

"I am glad you like my stuff," answered Hemming, "and as for Anticosti, why, I believe one could make some interesting copy there."

"You must try it one of these days," said Dodder.

At that moment, a thin, undersized man entered the room, without the formality of knocking. He

walked with a slight limp in his left foot. Dodder introduced him to Hemming as Mr. Wells, the syndicate's treasurer, and a partner in the concern. Wells gave the correspondent a nerveless handshake.

"Glad to meet you," he said, and turned to the manager with an air of inquiry.

It was clear to the Englishman that Dodder was not thoroughly at ease in his partner's company. He returned to his cigar and his seat with a suggestion of "by your leave" in his air.

"I think we shall let Captain Hemming start south as soon as he likes," he said.

"It's a pleasure trip, is it?" remarked Wells, with his hands in his pockets, and a casual eye on the Englishman.

Hemming stared, his cigar half-raised to his lips. Dodder flushed.

"Then Captain Hemming shall start day after to-morrow," he said, in a soothing voice. Wells paid no attention to this remark.

"I want you to send in more copy. You might let us have extra stories from each place, under another name. We could use them," he said to Hemming. The monocle held him in its unwinking regard for several seconds. Then the Englishman spoke:

"I wish you to understand me from the start,"

he said. "When I was in the service of my country, I was perfectly willing to do one man's work, or three men's work, for the pay that I got, because it was a matter of sentiment with me, and because I could afford to do it. But now, if I do two men's work, as you suggest, I draw double pay. Another thing, I shall take my orders from one man, or I shall take no orders at all. Mr. Dodder is my man for choice."

It was evident that this speech of the new correspondent's threw Dodder into a flurry, and left Wells aghast. Hemming sat in his comfortable chair, and calmly smoked his excellent cigar. At last Wells found his voice.

"I think the less I have to do with this man, the better," he said, and left the room. When the door shut behind him, Dodder sighed with relief.

"Thank God that's over," he said, and immediately expanded to his former genial self.

"What is the matter with him?" asked Hemming, mildly.

"Guess he was born that way," replied the manager, "and he really doesn't know what an impression he gives. He has a great head for business."

"I should judge so," said Hemming.

Dodder laughed. "Now pull up your chair and we'll make your plans," he said, straightening his

bulky legs under the table. They worked busily with maps and note-books for over an hour. At the end of that time a clerk entered with a bunch of letters and manuscripts. One of the letters was for Hemming. It had been readdressed and forwarded half a dozen times; and after all it proved to be nothing more important than a meandering scrawl from Major O'Grady. "We keep your memory green, dear boy," wrote the major, and much more in the same vein. But a crooked postscript proved of interest. It said that Penthouse was back in Dublin, and was going to the bow-wows at a fearful pace.

Hemming completed his arrangements with the syndicate, and, returning to his hotel, lunched solidly on underdone steak, French fried potatoes, a bottle of ale, a jam tart, and coffee. Love might display clay feet. Wells might be as rude as the devil, and Penthouse might go to the devil, but Herbert Hemming did not intend setting forth on his affairs with an empty stomach. The world was a rotten enough place without that. He consumed three cigarettes over his coffee, in a leisurely manner, and by the time he had left his table by the window the great dining-room was empty. He spent the rest of the day wandering about the city,

conquering a desire to write to Miss Travers. He dined at an Italian restaurant, and went early to bed. By nine next morning, he and his traps were aboard a little south-bound steamer.

CHAPTER IV.

THE ADVENT OF MR. O'ROURKE AND HIS SERVANT

THE company of the *Laura* was small and undistinguished. The captain was a Nova Scotian, big and red, who had, once upon a time, skippered a full-rigged ship, and who still sighed at the memory of it as he looked along the narrow, dirty decks of his present craft. The mate was a New Yorker, with a master's certificate and a head full of stories of the prowess of the American Navy. The chief engineer had once been a good man in his profession, but the whiskey of his mother country had surely and slowly brought him down to his present berth. The half-dozen passengers were of little interest to Hemming, and the days dragged for him, sickening with memories. In self-defence he reverted to fiction, and even attempted verse.

One morning, in the Gulf of Mexico, the *Laura* was signalled by an open boat with a rubber blanket for sail. The engines slowed. Hemming was on

the bridge at the time, and turned the captain's glass upon the little craft.

"What do you make of it, sir?" inquired the skipper, from the door of the tiny chart-room below.

"She looks like a ship's boat," replied Hemming. "The sail is rigged square, with a boat-hook and an oar for yards, and has a hole in the middle; it's a poncho, I think. There's a nigger forward, waving a shirt, and a white man aft, smoking."

The captain hurried up to the bridge and took the glass. After aiming it at the bobbing stranger, he turned to Hemming.

"My boat," he said, "and the same damn fool aboard her."

"Your boat?" inquired Hemming.

The mariner glared, with angry eyes, across the glinting water. Suddenly his face cleared. "I win," he cried. "I bet him ten dollars he'd have to get out inside six weeks, and by cracky, so he has!"

"Who is he?" asked the Englishman.

"He's Mr. O'Rourke, the man who's lookin' for trouble," replied the big Nova Scotian.

"What's he doing with your boat, and why didn't he take a decent sail while he was about it?" Hemming asked.

"He had a decent enough sail when I saw him

last," explained the skipper, "and I don't mean to say that he's a thief. He paid for the boat, right enough, though he bargained pretty close. He wanted to see more of Cuba, you know, but the Spaniards wouldn't have anything more to do with him, because of something he wrote, so he just got me to steam in five weeks ago, and let him off in the port life-boat. Now he's back again, with a nigger."

"What's his game?" asked Hemming.

"Search me, — unless it's just trouble," said the mariner, returning the glass and hurrying down to the deck.

By this time the *Laura* was rolling lazily. The captain ordered a man to stand ready with a line; the poncho was lowered, aboard the adventurous rowboat, and the nigger manned the oars; the white man in the stern sheets stood up and raised his Panama hat, and the passengers along the *Laura's* rail replied with cheers. The captain leaned far over the side. "What about that bet?" he shouted. The stranger drew his hand from a pocket of his ragged ducks and held something aloft, — something crumpled and green. Then he regained his soaring seat, and gripped the tiller.

The captain lifted a beaming countenance to Hemming on the bridge. "That's the first white man

who ever got out of Cuba with ten dollars," he bawled. Evidently the captain did not consider Spaniards as white men.

The line was thrown, and went circling and unfolding through the air until it fell into the boat. The ladder was unlashed and dropped over the *Laura's* side. In a minute O'Rourke and the pacifico were on the deck, and in another minute the port life-boat was back on its davits. O'Rourke was warmly welcomed aboard. Even the chief engineer appeared from below to shake his hand. The captain hurried him to the chart-room, and beckoned to Hemming from the door. When Hemming entered, he found the newcomer lying full length on the locker, with a glass of whiskey and water in his left hand, and the other under his head. He got stiffly to his feet upon the Englishman's entrance, and, after shaking hands cordially, lay down again.

"Now what do you think of that?" queried the skipper, glancing from O'Rourke to the other.

O'Rourke laughed good-naturedly, but with a note of weariness. "I must confess it was not exactly a Sunday-school picnic," he said, "and a chap's insides get fearfully squirmy on a diet of sugar-cane and a few random plantains."

The skipper, who had been carefully, even lov-

ingly, mixing drinks in two more glasses, eyed O'Rourke severely.

"You'd better get married, and give up them tomfool actions," he said, "or some fine day the Spaniards will catch up to you, and then, — well, you'll be sorry, that's all."

"They caught up to several of our party this time," remarked O'Rourke, casually.

"By Jove!" exclaimed Hemming, straightening his eye-glass.

The man with the Irish name and non-committal accent turned his head on the locker, and smiled at the other adventurer.

"They were not particular pals of mine," he said, reassuringly, "so I didn't stay to inquire their fate."

"You're fool enough to have stayed," remarked the skipper.

Hemming stared at the free and easy language of the mariner, and at O'Rourke's good-natured way of taking it, for he had not yet become entirely accustomed to the ways of the world outside the army, and this O'Rourke, though unshaven and in tatters, was certainly a gentleman, by Hemming's standards. The master of the *Laura* may have read something of this in his passenger's face, for he turned to him and said: "Mr. O'Rourke and I

are pretty good friends. We've played ashore together, and we've sailed together more than once, and when I call him a fool, why, it's my way of saying he's the bangest-up, straight-grained man I know. I never call him a fool before his inferiors, and if it came to any one else calling him anything, why — " and he slapped his big red hand on the chart-room table with a blow that rocked the bottles.

" Shut up," said O'Rourke, blushing beneath his bristles and tan, " or Captain Hemming will take me for as silly an ass as he takes you."

" Not at all," began Hemming, awkwardly, and, when the others roared with laughter, he hid his confusion by draining his glass. He had never before been laughed at quite so violently, but he found, rather to his surprise, that he liked it.

After lunch, O'Rourke (whose full name was Bertram St. Ives O'Rourke) retired to his stateroom, and did not reappear until dinner-time. He looked better then, clean shaven, and attired in one of the skipper's extra warm-weather suits. He filled the borrowed clothes well enough in length and in breadth of shoulder, but confessed, at table, that the trousers lapped twice around his waist. During the simple meal, the conversation was all of the internal disturbance of Cuba, and all the passengers, as well as the skipper, seemed interested

in the matter and well informed of recent incidents. Hemming listened keenly, now and then putting a question. O'Rourke told a part of his adventures during his last stay in the island, and sketched, in vivid and well-chosen words, the daily life of the patriots. It was not as romantic as Hemming had hoped.

"It's a low sort of fighting on both sides, — not the kind you have mixed in," said O'Rourke to Hemming.

"I?" exclaimed Hemming, while the dusky passengers and burly skipper pricked up their ears.

"I saw your initials — H. H. — on your cigarette case," he explained, "and I have read some good things signed H. H., by an Englishman, on English army life, so of course I spotted you."

"I'm doing work for the New York News Syndicate now," said Hemming.

After dinner, O'Rourke led the way to the chart-room. From the locker he produced a small typewriting machine. This he oiled, and set up on the table. The skipper winked at Hemming.

"I wish I'd smashed the danged thing while he was away," he said. O'Rourke paid not the slightest attention to this pleasantry, but inserted a sheet of paper, of which he had a supply stored in the same place of safety.

"Now," said he, seating himself on a camp-stool before the machine, "I don't mind how much you two talk, but I have some work to do."

"You, too?" laughed the Englishman.

"I'm only a free-lance," said O'Rourke, and, lighting a cigarette, he began clicking the keys. For more than an hour he worked steadily, while the skipper and Hemming sat side by side on the locker and told stories. The door was hooked open, and a fresh breeze kept the room cool, and circled the pungent smoke.

When Hemming turned in, he found that he could not sleep. His brain jumped and kept busy, in spite of him. Now he lived again his exciting days in Northern India. From this he flashed to the Norfolk tennis lawn, where Molly Travers listened again to his ardent vows. He turned over and tried to win himself to slumber by counting imaginary sheep. But that only seemed to suggest to his memory the care-free days of his youth. Again he built forts in the warm earth of the potting-house. Again he fled from the red-headed gardener, and stumbled into piled-up ranks of flower-pots, hurling them to destruction. Again he watched his father, in pink and spurs, trot down the avenue in the gold, rare sunlight of those days. Feeling that these good memories would carry him safely

to the land of peace, he closed his eyes, — only to find his mind busy with that last day in London. He climbed swiftly from his berth, and, after slipping his feet into his shoes, ascended to the deck. He did not wait to change his pajamas for anything more conventional. There was not a breath of wind. The stars burned big and white; the water over the side flashed away in silver fire, and farther out some rolling fish broke its trail of flame; to starboard lay a black suggestion of land. Looking forward, he saw that the door of the chart-room stood open, emitting a warm flood of lamplight. He went up to the lower bridge, or half-deck, where the chart-room stood, and glanced within. The skipper lay on the locker, snoring peacefully, and O'Rourke still clicked at the typewriter. Hemming stole quietly in and poured himself a glass of water from the clay bottle on the rack.

"Don't let me disturb you," he said to the worker. "I'll just have a smoke to kill wakefulness."

"If you can't sleep," said O'Rourke, "just listen to this as long as your eyes will stay open."

He sorted over his pages of copy and began to read. His voice was low-pitched, and through it sounded the whispering of the steamer's passage across the rocking waters. The style was full of colour, and Hemming was keenly interested from

start to finish. Not until the last page was turned over did O'Rourke look up.

"What! not asleep yet!" he exclaimed.

"That seems to me very fine," said Hemming, seriously, "and I should certainly take it for literature of an unusually high order if I did not know that journalists cannot write literature."

"Do you think it will do?" asked O'Rourke, modestly.

"My dear chap," replied Hemming, "it will do for anything, — for a book, or to carve on a monument. It's a dashed sight too good for any newspaper."

"It certainly wouldn't do for a newspaper," laughed the younger man. "Just imagine an editor with a blue pencil, loose on those descriptions of vegetation. When I do newspaper stuff, I throw in the blood and leave out the beauty. That is for *Griffin's Magazine.*"

"Are you sure of your market?" asked the Englishman, wondering for even in England, *Griffin's* was known for its quality.

"It was ordered," said O'Rourke, "and this will make the ninth article I have done for them within five years. After months of seeing and feeling things, I put the heart of it all, at one sitting, into a story for *Griffin's.* After that I cook my experi-

ences and hard-earned knowledge into lesser dishes for lesser customers. Sometimes I even let it off in lyrics."

"You must flood the magazines," remarked Hemming, dryly.

"Not I. To begin with, I place a great deal of my work with publications of which you have never heard, and then, as I am young and very productive, I write under three names, using my own for only the things I wish to stand."

He arose and turned out the light, and to Hemming's amazement gray dawn was on the sea and the narrow decks, and on the morning wind came the odour of coffee.

"I think we are both good for a nap now," said O'Rourke. They left the master of the boat slumbering on his narrow couch, and went to their staterooms; and before Hemming fell asleep, with his face to the draft of the port, he thanked God in his heart for a new friend.

CHAPTER V.

THE ADVENTURERS DISPENSE WITH MR. NUNEZ

HEMMING and O'Rourke, and O'Rourke's low-caste Cuban, landed in Belize. The *Laura* continued on her way to Truxillo, and more southern ports, for which she had a mixed freight of cheap articles of American manufacture. She would start north again from Costa Rica, should she be able to find a cargo, so O'Rourke and Hemming had both given manuscripts and letters to the Nova Scotia skipper, for mailing at the first likely opportunity, with word that they would wire an address later. This done, the adventurers purchased three undersized mules. O'Rourke picked up what he could in the way of an outfit, having left everything but his pipe and poncho in the Cuban bush. They loaded one of the mules with their belongings, and put it in charge of John Nunez, and, mounting the others, started south, skirting the coast. The trip was uneventful, but Hemming wrote a number of stories descriptive

of the country and the people, the mules and his companions, under the general title of " Along New Trails with Old Mules." O'Rourke regarded his friend's display of energy with kindly disdain.

" There is bigger game to seaward," he said, and seemed ever on the lookout for rumours of war from the northeast. After three weeks' easy travelling, they awoke one morning to find that John Nunez had taken his departure during the night, and, along with his departure, one of their mules, a bag of hardtack and a slab of bacon.

O'Rourke looked relieved. " I've often wondered how I could ever get rid of him, you know. I once saved his life," he said.

" It's a good thing we happened to be using the rest of the provisions for pillows, or, by gad, your precious servant would have left us to starve," replied Hemming, in injured tones.

" Cheer up, old man," laughed O'Rourke. " We're not three miles from the coast, and I'll bet we are within ten of a village of some sort," he explained.

He was right, for by noon they were sitting at their ease before black coffee and a Spanish omelette, in a shabby eating-house. The town was one of some importance — in its own eyes. Also it interested Hemming. But O'Rourke sniffed.

"Gay colours and bad smells — I've experienced the whole thing before," said he.

"Then why the devil did you leave the *Laura?*" asked Hemming, pouring himself another glass of doubtful claret.

"To look after you," retorted O'Rourke.

"But, seriously," urged the Englishman.

"Oh, if you will be serious," confessed the free-lance, "I'll admit that it's in my blood. I might have gone to New York and waited till further developments in Cuba; but I could no more see you go ashore, to waste your time and money, without wanting to follow suit, than you could see me buy that high-priced claret without wanting to drink it all yourself."

Hemming turned his monocle upon his friend in mild and curious regard.

"I doubt if there is another chap alive," he said, "who can write such wisdom and talk such rot as you."

"Oh, go easy," expostulated O'Rourke, "you've only read one article of mine — the twenty-page result of five weeks' sugar-cane and observation."

"It was remarkable stuff," mused Hemming.

The younger man had the grace to bow. "You don't look like the kind of chap who is lavish with his praise," he said.

Lighting a potent local cigar, he leaned back in his rickety chair, and shouted something in Spanish. The owner of the place appeared, rubbing his hands together and bowing. He was a fat, brown man, smelling of native cookery and native tobacco. O'Rourke talked, at some length, in Spanish, only a few words of which could Hemming understand. The proprietor waved his cigarette and gabbled back. Again O'Rourke took up the conversation, and this time his flow of mongrel Spanish was pricked out with bluff English oaths.

Hemming asked what it was all about. O'Rourke gave himself up to laughter.

"I have been trying to sell our mules," he said, at last, "but find that the market is already glutted."

Hemming shook his head disconsolately. "I fail to see the joke," he said.

"Mine host here informs me that a Cuban gentleman arrived shortly after daylight this morning," continued O'Rourke, "and sold a mule to the American consul."

"Our mule," gasped the enlightened Englishman — then, leaping from his chair with a violence that caused the fat proprietor to take refuge behind a table, he cried that there was still a chance of overtaking the rascal. O'Rourke begged him to finish his claret in peace. "And don't do anything rash,"

he said, "for I warn you that if you catch him you'll have to keep him. I tremble even now, lest he should enter the door and reclaim me as his master." He blew a thin wisp of smoke toward the ceiling, and laughed comfortably. Then his glance lowered to his friend, who had reseated himself at the other side of the table. He saw amazement and consternation written large in Hemming's face. The landlord also looked thunderstruck, standing with his mouth open, his eyes fixed upon the door, and a dirty napkin idle in his hand. O'Rourke turned and followed their enraptured gaze — and behold, clothed in new trousers and gaudy poncho, John Nunez bowing on the threshold.

For long seconds a painful silence held the inmates of the eating-house in thrall. The delinquent broke it with a stream of talk. He pointed heavenward; he touched his breast with his fingers; he spread his arms wide, and all the while he gabbled in Spanish. Tears ran down his dusky cheeks. O'Rourke regained his easy attitude, and heard the story to the end. He kept his gaze upon the Cuban's face, and not once did the Cuban meet it. At last the fellow stopped talking, and stood before his master with his sullen, tear-stained face half-hidden in a fold of his gay blanket.

"Well?" inquired Hemming.

"He says that he meant no harm," replied O'Rourke, "but that the desire to steal was like fever in his blood. He swears this by more saints than I know the name of. He says that he will give me the money that he got for the mule, and will toil for me until the day of his death, without a dollar of wages. But he has sworn all these things before, and every fit of repentance seems to make him more of a rogue. As for wages — why, his grub costs more than he is worth."

"Just let me take him in hand," said Hemming.

"You may try," assented O'Rourke.

By this time, and knowing his master's easy nature, Nunez was feeling more at home. The attitude of the penitent was not natural to him. He freed one arm from the folds of his poncho and calmly extracted a cigarette from his sash. This he was about to light when Hemming's voice arrested him in the act.

"Throw away that cigarette," came the order.

The Cuban feigned ignorance of the English language. He raised his eyebrows, paused a second to smile insolently, and lit the frail roll of black tobacco with a flourish. He inhaled the first puff with very evident pleasure, and let it escape by way of his nostrils. But he did not draw the second, for Hemming's hand landed unexpectedly upon the

side of his head. The cigarette flew at a tangent, unrolling as it hit the earthen floor. The Cuban span completely around, reeled for a second, and then sprang at the Englishman with drawn knife. O'Rourke and the half-breed Mexican cried a warning. They might have saved their breath for their next long walk, for Hemming, quick as a terrier in his movements, stepped to one side and delivered a remarkable blow with his fist. The Cuban — a flash of gay clothing and harmless knife-blade — went, backward, through the narrow doorway.

"And now," said Hemming to O'Rourke, "what are we to do next?"

"Do next?" repeated O'Rourke, sadly, "why, just sit and whistle for the fifty Mexican dollars, which the American consul paid John for our mule."

Hemming hurried to the door and looked up and down the glaring street. Nunez was nowhere to be seen.

"He's not lying around anywhere, shamming dead, is he?" inquired O'Rourke.

"Don't see him," replied Hemming.

"Then now is our chance to shake him for good," said the other, "and the only way I can think of is to put out to sea."

As if he had made the most reasonable suggestion

in the world, he paid their score and stepped into the street. Hemming followed to the water-front, too deep in wonder to offer objections, or demand explanations.

CHAPTER VI.

HEMMING HEARS OF THE VILLAIN

Six days later, in a club in Kingston, Jamaica, Hemming ran across a naval officer whom he had met, years ago, at a county ball.

"Hullo, left the army?" asked the sailor.

"Verily," replied Hemming, who could not recall the other's name.

"What — more money?"

"Less."

"Nice scandal in your old regiment. You're well out of it."

"I have heard nothing. We rather prided ourselves on our respectability."

"A chap called Penthouse," ran on the sailor, "has turned out a regular sneak-thief. The others began to miss things — money and cuff-links, and trifles like that — and one day the colonel caught him in his room pocketing a gold watch. I believe the poor beggar was hard up — at least so my correspondent says."

At this point he noticed the pallor of Hemming's face.

"Not a friend of yours, I hope," he added, hastily.

"Far from it, but he is related to some people I know very well," replied Hemming.

"He was a low cur, even before he turned thief," said the talkative sailor, "and Jones tells me he fleeced an awfully decent, but stupid sort of chap — " He came to a full stop, and glared blankly at his new-found acquaintance.

"Thank you," laughed Hemming, who had regained his composure as the navy man lost his.

"Ah — damn silly break, wasn't it?" gabbled the other, turning to O'Rourke, "but you two'll come aboard to-morrow, and have lunch with us. One-thirty, and there's a turtle in the pot." He left the club without waiting for an answer.

Hemming and O'Rourke had made the voyage from Honduras to Kingston in a fifty-foot schooner. For passage-money they had handed over the two mules, together with the residue of their provisions. Things are not as cheap as they look in Central America. O'Rourke had navigated the vessel, for the owner had proved himself useless, and Hemming had hauled on sheets and halyards and worked the antiquated pump. But in time they had arrived safely in Kingston, and never had hot water and

clean food felt and tasted so good. Hemming had mailed his "copy," O'Rourke had gone to a tailor; and now they lived at ease, and awaited checks and letters from the North. The friendship of these two had been an assured thing from the moment of their first meeting, in the chart-room of the *Laura,* and it had grown steadily with every adventure and hardship in common. They respected each other's dauntless spirits and literary styles. Hemming admired O'Rourke's cheerful heart, and his faculty (almost amounting to genius) for getting out of tight places. He also liked his manners, and envied him the length of his limbs. O'Rourke, in his turn, admired his comrade's knowledge of things in general, and the way in which he kept quiet about incidents in his past, without sulkiness. He liked his hasty, forgiving temper, and felt an almost personal anger toward whatever, or whoever, had embittered his life; and he considered him as well set-up a middleweight as he had ever seen. From O'Rourke, Hemming learned to do things for himself — little things like rolling a blanket, frying bacon, and pitching a tent. In the past there had always been a Mr. Thomas Atkins to look after such trifles. Also he learned that no knowledge comes amiss to a roving newspaper man, from the science of navigation to the art of sewing on patches,

and the low occupation of grooming a mule. He realized how much more comfortable his life in the army, and his travelling in Greece and Turkey would have been, had he been able to turn his own hand to the things other people had left undone. His heart warmed toward his instructor. One night, while they were smoking on the veranda of their hotel, and looking away at the lights in the harbour, he told a little of his story — something of Penthouse, and something of the girl he loved. But he did not mention her name, and, much to his relief, O'Rourke did not seem curious about it. That was one of O'Rourke's most comfortable characteristics. It was really a matter of breeding. He was deeply interested in whatever a person chose to tell him, and he would put helpful questions which did not call for further confessions; but he never tried to draw a man. One might safely tell him that one's grandmother had been a cannibal, without fear of being asked any question concerning one's grandfather. If he really wanted to know, he would go quietly to some one else for the information.

Shortly after arriving in Jamaica, Hemming wrote a letter to Anderson, his particular friend in the Engineers. He mentioned having heard of Penthouse's outbreak, but said nothing of the occurrences of his last visit to London. He told, at a

length suggestive of his profession, of the trip through Yucatan and Honduras, of his new friend, and of the adventurous passage from the coast of Central America to Kingston. He sang the praises of a free life and the glories of the tropics. He spoke of his success with the syndicate, and the probability of fighting in Cuba in the near future. He tried hard to make every line of the letter echo contentment, knowing that Anderson would, very likely, retail its contents to Miss Travers.

"My God," he said, "I was fool enough, once, to let her see the wound she made, but once is for all."

For the remainder of the morning O'Rourke found him in a low mood, and after trying, in vain, to raise his spirits with a new cigar as long as a riding-boot, he smoked the weed himself and wrote a ballad about pirates and blood. It was the ballad, complete after an hour's work, that did the business for Hemming. The swinging lines and rolling phrases, the fearful sea-oaths and unexpected rhymes started him in action. At first he was not sure whether he wanted to ride or write, but, with a little tactful persuasion from O'Rourke, decided on the former. They hired a couple of horses, went to the club, and drew several of their friends of H. M. S. *Thunderer,* and rode for hours, lunching late, out of town.

One morning Hemming received a cablegram from Dodder, of the New York Syndicate, telling him to stand ready for orders, and that a letter followed. In a few days the letter came. It was a friendly, though businesslike epistle, and contained a check. It ran as follows:

"My dear Captain Hemming: — Your stories reached me, and were immediately set up and distributed broadcast. They please me, as does all your work. I got a check from Wells for the amount of two months' expenses (at the rate we agreed upon), and your salary, up to date, has been marked to your credit. I believe there will be trouble in Europe before long, and we hear that Devlin, of whom I spoke to you, is down with some sort of fever. Be prepared to start East at the shortest notice, and please look up some one, an experienced man, of course, to keep an eye on Cuba for us, should you have to leave. A man who knows the country, and is immune from yellow fever, would be of more value than an experienced journalist. We have journalists here, but I fear they would fall down on the job. I do not believe the Cuban affair will ever come to more than skirmishing, but even that is interesting when it happens at our own back door.

No mail has come to us for you. Please write us if you know of a man.

"Yours very sincerely,

"WASHINGTON DODDER, *Manager*."

Hemming read it to O'Rourke.

"Will you accept the job?" he asked.

"Yes, when some one lands an invading army, but not before," replied O'Rourke. "Fact is, I'm afraid to sneak into the place again. The Spaniards know me too well. I've run away with Gomez and I've retreated with Garcia, and I've had quite enough of it. But if you have to leave and I can't get a chance to go along with you, I'll keep my eye on things, and do what a man can. I can at least send them some photographs of starving women and babies with distended tummies. I notice, by the magazines, that the popular fancy is turning toward sweet pictures of that kind, and, as luck would have it, I indulged in photography last time I was there, and the films happened to be in my pocket when John and I sailed away."

Thus did Bertram St. Ives O'Rourke, the free-lance who hated to move or stay at any man's bidding, fetter himself with the chain of duty, and become the servant of a great syndicate. But for weeks he did not feel the chain, but made merry

with sailors and landsmen, and did inspired work for *Griffin's Magazine*. At last word came to Hemming, calling him to the East to report the actions of the wily Turk and courageous Greek, and, after putting his friend aboard the mail-boat, O'Rourke sat down and grappled the fact of his own responsibilities. After due consideration he wrote to the syndicate, explained his position, mentioned his past efforts in Cuba, and promised some interesting cables if they would send him enough money to charter a tug. To his amazement (his name carried more weight than he knew) they wired the money and told him to go ahead.

Thus it happened that within eight days of one another's departure, and after an intimate and affectionate friendship, Herbert Hemming sailed for one battle-field and Bertram St. Ives O'Rourke for another, and one stout gentleman in New York paid all the pipers.

CHAPTER VII.

AN ELDERLY CHAMPION

WHILE Herbert Hemming tried to ease the bitterness of his heart and forget the injustice that had been done him, in new scenes and amid new companions, Miss Travers suffered at home. Her lover had scarcely left the house before misgivings tore her. Now, alone and shaken with grief, she saw upon what treasonable foundation she had accused an honourable man of — she hardly knew what. Why had he listened to her? Why had he not laughed, and kissed away her awful, hysterical foolishness? Then she remembered how she had repulsed his caress, and there in the narrow, heavily furnished drawing-room she leaned her head upon her arms and prayed.

Half an hour later she was startled by the ringing of the door-bell, and hastened to her own room.

The caller was an elderly bachelor brother of her mother's — a man with a small income, a taste for bridge, and tongue and ears for gossip. His visits

were always welcome to Mrs. Travers. Mrs. Travers was a stout lady much given to family prayers, scandal, and disputes with servants. As the widow of a bishop she felt that she filled, in the being of the nation, a somewhat similar position to that occupied by Westminster Abbey. She doted on all those in temporal and spiritual authority, almost to the inclusion of curates and subalterns, — if they had expectations. Once upon a time, seeing nothing larger in sight for her daughter, she had been Herbert Hemming's motherly friend. Then she had heard from Mr. Penthouse (who was poor and dissipated, and might some day become a baronet) that Hemming's fortune was not nearly so large as people supposed. At first she had watched the change in her daughter, under Penthouse's influence, with vague alarm; but a suspicion of more eligible suitors in the offing stilled her fears. The hints which her pleasing nephew brought to her, of Hemming's double life, inflamed her righteous anger against the quiet captain. Had her daughter's lover been the master of five thousand a year she would have admonished Penthouse to keep silence concerning the affairs of his superiors. As it was, she thought her righteous indignation quite genuine, for few people of her kind know the full extent of their respectable wickedness. Then had come news,

through her daughter, of Hemming's retirement from the army and entrance into journalism. Molly had mentioned it, very quietly, one morning at breakfast. Then had come Hemming himself, and with vast satisfaction she had heard him leave the house without any bright laughter at the door. And just as she had determined to descend and soothe Molly with words of pious comfort, her brother had arrived.

Mrs. Travers heard Molly go to her room and close the door. She decided that charity would keep better than Mr. Pollin's gossip, so she descended to the drawing-room as fast as her weight would allow. They shook hands cordially; after which Mr. Pollin stood respectfully until his sister got safely deposited in the strongest chair in the room.

Mr. Pollin was a gossip, as I have previously stated, but many of his stories were harmless. He dressed in the height of fashion, and, in spite of his full figure, carried himself jauntily. In his youth (before he had come in for his modest property, and mastered whist) he had studied law, and it was rumoured that he had even tried to write scholarly articles and book reviews for the daily press. At one stage in his career his sister and the late bishop had really trembled for his respectability; but their fears had proved to be unfounded, for, lacking en-

couragement from the editors, Mr. Pollin had settled down to unbroken conventionality. Mr. Pollin's features resembled his sister's, but his mouth was more given to smiling, and his eyes held a twinkle, while hers were dimly lit with a gleam of cold calculation.

To-day Mr. Pollin had quite unexpected news, at first-hand from an Irish acquaintance of his, a Major O'Grady. But he did not blurt it out, as a lesser gossip would have done.

"Have you seen Harry Penthouse lately?" he asked.

"Not for two days," said the lady.

Mr. Pollin crossed his knees with an effort, and tried to look over his waistcoat at his polished boots.

"He returns to his regiment shortly," added Mrs. Travers.

Her brother coughed gently, and scrutinized the ring on his finger with an intensity that seemed quite uncalled for.

"What is the matter?" cried the lady, breathless with the suspense.

"Nothing, my dear, although I hardly envy Harry. I'm afraid he will find his regiment a rather uncomfortable place," replied Pollin.

"Do you mean the regiment, or his quarters, Richard?"

"His quarters are comfortable enough for a better man," replied the elderly dandy, with a slight ring of emotion in his voice.

"Richard," exclaimed the dame, "what are you hinting about your nephew?"

"No nephew of mine," replied the other, "nor even of yours, I think. Poor Charles and old Sir Peter were first cousins, were they not?"

"But they were just like brothers," she urged.

"It's a pity young Penthouse hadn't been spanked more in his early youth," remarked Mr. Pollin.

Mrs. Travers began to feel decidedly uneasy. Could it be that Harry had, in some way, forfeited his chances of the estate and title? Could it be that the invalid brother, the unsociable, close-fisted one, had married? But she did not put the questions.

"What rash thing has the young man done?" she inquired.

"Nothing rash, but something dashed low," answered her brother. "To-day," he continued, "I received a letter from a gentleman whom it appears I've met several times in the country, Major O'Grady, of the Seventy-Third. He has evidently quite forgotten the fact that I am in any way connected with Harry Penthouse, or interested in Herbert Hemming, and after several pages of reference to some exciting rubbers we have had together (I

really cannot recall them to mind), he casually tells me the inner history of Hemming's leaving the service."

"Ah, I thought so," sighed Mrs. Travers.

"Thought what, my dear sister?" asked Pollin, shortly.

The good lady was somewhat confused by the abruptness of her brother's manner, and her guard was forgotten.

"That the inner history," she replied, "is that Captain Hemming was requested to resign his commission."

"You have jumped the wrong way, Cordelia," said the gentleman, with a disconcerting smile, "for the regiment, from the colonel to the newest subaltern, and from the sergeant-major to the youngest bugler, are, figuratively speaking, weeping over his departure."

Mrs. Travers seemed to dwindle in her chair. "Then why did he retire?" she asked, in a thin whisper.

"Because Harry Penthouse wolfed all his money. At first he borrowed a hundred or so, and lost it gambling. Hemming got a bit shy, but thought, of course, that some day it would all be paid back. He wanted to help the boy, so, after a good deal of persuasion, endorsed his note for a large sum,

and the note was cashed by a Jew who had helped Penthouse before. The Jew was honest, but he came a cropper himself, and could not afford to renew the note. Penthouse had only enough left to carry him stylishly over his two months' leave, so Hemming had to stump up. O'Grady says he didn't get so much as a 'Thank you' from the young bounder."

For several minutes the lady kept a stunned silence. Presently she braced herself, and laughed unmusically.

"I have heard a very different story," she said, "and I believe from a better authority than this Major O'Brady."

"O'Grady," corrected Pollin, "and a very dear friend of mine — cousin to Sir Brian O'Grady."

The good fellow's imagination was getting the bit in its teeth by this time, and his mind was turning toward the quiet of his club, and a nip of something before dinner.

"You have your choice between Major O'Grady's story and Harry Penthouse's," said the lady.

"And I choose O'Grady's," replied the gentleman, "because I know Penthouse and I know Herbert. Herbert is a good soldier and a good sort, and Harry is a damned overgrown, overfed cad."

He stole away without farewell, abashed and surprised at his own heat and breach of etiquette.

After her brother's departure Mrs. Travers sought her daughter. She wanted to know all the particulars of Hemming's visit.

"It is all over between us," sobbed the girl, and beyond that she could learn nothing. Having failed to receive information, she immediately began to impart some, and told what Mr. Pollin had heard from Major O'Grady. Molly, who lay on the bed, kept her face buried in the pillow, and showed no signs of hearing anything. At last her mother left her, after saying that she would send her dinner up to her. The bewildered woman had never felt quite so put about since the death of the lord bishop. Could it be, she wondered, that she had made a mistake in encouraging Harry Penthouse's work tearing down Molly's belief in Hemming? Even her dinner did not altogether reassure her troubled spirit.

Several days later Miss Travers wrote to Hemming. It contained only a line or two. It begged his forgiveness. It called him to return and let her show her love. She sent it to his old address in Dublin, and in the corner wrote "Please forward."

Now it happened that Private Malloy, who had once been Captain Hemming's orderly, was sent one



"SEVERAL DAYS LATER MISS TRAVERS WROTE TO HEMMING"

day, by a sergeant, for the officers' mail. He thought himself a sly man, did Mr. Malloy, and when he found a letter addressed to his late beloved master, in a familiar handwriting, he decided that it was from "one of them dunnin' Jews," and carefully separated it from the pile. Later he burned it. "One good turn deserves another," said he, watching the thin paper flame and fade.

Penthouse returned to his regiment without calling again on Molly and Mrs. Travers. Somehow, after the beating he had received, he did not feel like showing his face anywhere in town. Day after day Molly waited for an answer to her letter. By this time she had heard, from Captain Anderson (who had acted nervously during his short call), of Hemming's intention of going immediately to Greece. So for two weeks she waited hopefully. Then the horrible fear that she had hurt him beyond pardoning, perhaps even disgusted him, grew upon her. But for more than a month every brisk footfall on the pavement and every ring at the door-bell set her heart burning and left it throbbing with pain.

When she drove with her mother she scanned the faces of the men in the street, and often and often she changed colour at sight of a thin, alert face or broad, gallant shoulders in the crowd.

Captain Anderson was at Aldershot when he re-

ceived his friend's letter from Jamaica. He went up to town and called on Miss Travers, and, without so much as "by your leave," read her extracts from the letter. She listened quietly, with downcast eyes and white face. When he was through with it she looked at him kindly; but her eyes were dim.

"Why do you taunt me?" she asked. "Is it because you are his friend?" The smile that followed the question was not a happy one.

The sapper's honest face flamed crimson. "I thought you wanted to know about him," he stammered.

"Of course I am glad to hear that he is so successful — and so happy," she replied, and her mouth took on a hardness strange and new to it. She remembered the passionate appeal in her own letter — the cry of love that had awakened no answering cry — and her pride and anger set to work to tear the dreams from her heart. But a dream built by the Master Workman, of stuffs lighter than the wind, outlasts the heavy walls of kings' monuments.

CHAPTER VIII.

HEMMING UNDERTAKES A DIGNIFIED WORK

HEMMING went through the Turko-Grecian campaign from beginning to end, with much credit to himself and profit to the syndicate. He worked hard, and, on occasions, risked life and limb. No word of legitimate news of actions got out of the country ahead of his. When the fighting was over, he wrote a careful article on the uselessness of the sword in modern battles. He described the few occasions in which he had seen a blooded sword in action. He damned them all — the pointed blade of the infantry officer, and the cutting sabre of the cavalry trooper. They would do for hill raids, or charges against savages, but before the steady fire of men on foot, armed with rifles of the latest pattern, they were hopeless. Their day had passed with the passing of the ramrod, he said. After heading it "Cold Steel in Modern Warfare," he decided that it would be a pity to waste it on the New York News Syndicate; for of late he had

become dissatisfied with his arrangements with the syndicate. He had found that, out of the dozen or more war-correspondents whom he had met during the campaign, only two were allowed so small a sum as he for expenses, and not one was paid so small a salary. So he mailed his wise story to a big London weekly, and wrote to Dodder for a raise in his salary and expenses. At this time he was living quietly in Athens, with a number of friends, — merry fellows, all, — but he missed O'Rourke's whimsical conversations and kindly comradeship.

The big London weekly published Hemming's article, and commented upon it editorially. It also sent him a modest check — more modest than its size and reputation would lead one to suppose. Mr. Dodder's letter arrived at about the same time. The manager of the syndicate was firm, though gentle. He pointed out that already Hemming drew more money than any other correspondent connected with the concern. He explained that, even now, Mr. Wells frequently grumbled. "And after all," he concluded, "you are a new man, and we are helping you to a reputation."

"We'll see about that," said Hemming, and wrote to say that he would like to take a holiday until more fighting turned up. He sent them his address for the next six months — Maidmill-on-Dee,

Cheshire, England. Then he sold his horse, packed his things, and sailed for England.

At Maidmill-on-Dee, in a stone cottage with a slated roof, lived an old couple named Thomson. During the brief married life of Hemming's parents, these two good folk had looked after their bodily welfare — Thomson as gardener and groom, and Mrs. Thomson as cook. Hemming's father, though well connected, had made his livelihood as a country doctor. The people in Maidmill-on-Dee still remembered him as a handsome, generous man with the manner of a lord lieutenant of the county, and with always a good horse in his stables. Hemming's mother had been the daughter of a scholarly, though poor, country vicar. She had been a beauty in a frail, white way, and a lover of her husband, her home, and good literature. When the doctor had died of blood-poisoning, contracted during a simple operation upon one of his many poor patients, she had tried, for awhile, to take heart again, but had followed him within a year. After the deaths of the parents a wealthy relative had remembered the son, and, finding him a youth of promise, had given him some money.

Hemming drove from the station in the public bus. He passed the house where so much of his earlier years had been spent, and told the driver

to take him to Joseph Thomson's. They rattled down the quiet, single street, and drew up at the stone threshold. He helped the driver pile his bags and boxes beside the door. Then he dismissed the conveyance, and paused for awhile before entering the cottage, with a warm, new feeling of home-coming in his heart. The low, wide kitchen was unoccupied, but the door leading to the garden behind stood open. He sat down in a well-worn chair and looked about. The October sunlight lit up the dishes on the dresser. A small table by a window was laid with plates and cups for two. He heard voices in the garden. A woman, stout and gray-haired, entered with a head of Brussels sprouts in her hand, and with her cotton skirt kilted up, displaying a bright, quilted petticoat. Hemming got up from his chair, but she was not looking toward him, and she was evidently hard of hearing. He stepped in front of her and laid his hands on her shoulders.

"Susan," he said, beaming.

"Lor', Master Bert," she exclaimed, "you're still at your tricks."

In a flutter of delight she smacked him squarely on the mouth, and then, blushing and trembling, begged his pardon.

"I can't think you're a grown-up man," she explained. She surveyed him at arm's length.

"You're not overly big," she said, "an' that's a fact. But you're surprisin' thick through the chest and wide i' the shoulders. An' who'd ever have looked for Master Bert, all so suddent, i' Maidmill-on-Dee."

By this time she was in a fair way to burst into tears, so fast were the old memories crowding upon her. Hemming feared tears more than the devil, and, patting her violently on the back, forced her into a chair.

"There, Susan, there. Now keep cool and fire low, and tell me what you are going to have for lunch?" he urged.

"Thomson," she called, "there is a gentleman here as wants to see you."

"Bes there, now?" said Thomson, and rubbed his hands on his smock.

"Never mind your hands," she called.

Thomson scraped his heavy way into the kitchen, and blinked at the visitor.

"Howde, sir," he remarked, affably.

"How are you, Thomson? Glad to see you again," said Hemming, extending his hand.

The old gardener gave back a step, with a slight cry and an uptossing of gnarled hands.

He recovered himself with an effort.

"God bless me, it's Master Herbert," he ex-

claimed. "Do you know, missus, I thought it was the doctor askin' how I was," he continued, turning to his wife, "but the master was a more sizable man, — yes, an' redder i' the face."

"Ay," replied Mrs. Thomson, "but hansome is as hansome does — meanin' nothin' disrespectful about the old master, God bless his memory, dear man, — and Master Bert is a fine appearin' young gentleman."

The gaffer nodded. "The lasses wud believe you, missus," he said.

"What lasses do you mean?" inquired the old woman, sharply. "Where's the lass i' this village fit to believe anything about one o' the queen's officers — tell me that."

"Ay, I was sayin' nothin'," replied Thomson.

The woman looked quizzically at Hemming.

"Like enough there's a young lady in Lunnon," she suggested.

"There is no young lady — anywhere," said Hemming, "and I'm no longer in the army. I'm at another trade now."

"Trade?" exclaimed Thomson.

"Well, hardly that," laughed Hemming. "I write for a living."

Mrs. Thomson nodded with satisfaction.

"The queen's son-in-law wrote a book," she said.

"I hardly do that kind," said Hemming, uneasily.

"I vum you don't, sir," cried the man, whacking the table, "not if the missus means the book she read to me out of, oncet."

Hemming was pleased with the old man's shrewdness, though Mrs. Thomson was shocked at his insinuations.

Hemming settled down in the cottage, much to the delight of the old couple. A fair-sized room on the ground floor was given over to him, for bedroom and study. The success of his last article had suggested to him the writing of a book about what he knew, and had seen, of the last brief campaign — something more lasting than his syndicate work, and more carefully done. This work would have colour, not too heavily splashed on; style, not too aggressive; and dignity befitting the subject. He decided that he must prune his newspaper style considerably for the book. So he settled down to his work, and after three days' honest labour, all that stood of it was the title, "Where Might Is Right." Strange to say, this seeming failure did not discourage him. He knew what he had to say, and felt that as soon as the right note for the expression of it was struck, it would be easy to go on. The pages he so ruthlessly destroyed were splendid

newspaper copy, but he knew the objection thinking men have to finding newspaper work between the covers of a book. But at last the opening chapter was done to his taste; and after that the work was easy and pleasant. It soon became his habit to get out of bed in time to breakfast with Thomson, who was a thrifty market-gardener on a small scale. After his breakfast he smoked a cigar in the garden, and sometimes told stories of his adventures to his host. By eight o'clock he was at his table, writing rapidly, but not steadily, until twelve o'clock. After the simple midday dinner he walked for several hours, and seldom went back to his work until candle-time. In this way, with books and magazines sent down every week from London, he managed to put in his time without letting himself think too often of Molly Travers. Nothing in the village reminded him of her, and his healthy days brought him, for the most part, dreamless nights.

The old people were immensely interested in Hemming and his work. They even persuaded him to read some of the chapters of his book aloud to them. It was plain to Hemming that Mrs. Thomson's signs of appreciation were matters more of the heart than the head; but not so with Thomson. He would applaud a convincing argument or a well-turned sentence by slapping his hand on his knee,

and for hours after a reading would sit by the chimney and mumble curses on the heads of the Turks. One morning, while Hemming was watching him at his work, he turned from the bonfire he had been tending and, without preamble, grasped his lodger's hand.

"You've a power of brains inside your head, sir," he said, with vehemence. Hemming felt that, even from O'Rourke, he had never received a more pleasing compliment. He rewarded the gaffer with a cigar from his own case.

By Christmas "Where Might Is Right" was finished, and posted to a London publisher. With this work done, restlessness returned to Hemming. He fought it off for awhile, but at last packed a bag with his best clothes, and, telling Mrs. Thomson to take care of his letters until his return, went up to London. First of all he called on the publishers to whom he had sent his book. The manager was in, and received Hemming cordially. He said that he had not yet looked at Hemming's manuscript, and that at present it was in town, having been taken away to a house-party by their literary adviser. However, he had followed Captain Hemming's career as a war-correspondent and writer of army stories with interest, and felt that it was altogether likely that the firm would want to do business with

him. The genial glow of the season must have been in the gentleman's blood, for he cordially invited Hemming to lunch with him at his club. Upon reaching the street Hemming found the fog, which had been scarcely noticeable a short time before, was rapidly thickening.

"Let us walk — it is but a step," said the publisher, "and I've made the trip in every kind of weather for the last twenty years."

On the steps of the club Hemming stumbled against a crouched figure. There was a dull yellow glare from the lamp above, and by it Hemming saw the beggar's bloated, hungry face, bedraggled red beard, and trembling hand. The eyes were cunning and desperate, but pitiful just then. Hemming passed the poor fellow a coin, — a two-shilling piece, — and followed his guide into the warm, imposing hall of the club, wondering where he had seen those unscrupulous eyes before. The club was brightly lighted. The lunch was long and complicated and very good. The publisher was vastly entertaining, and seemed in no hurry to get back to his work. Hemming's thoughts, in spite of the cheer, busied themselves with the beggar on the steps.

"Did you notice the beggar outside?" he asked, at last.

"The chap with the bushy beard? — why, yes, he is new to this quarter," replied the other.

"He was a desperate-looking devil, and I think the beard was false," remarked Hemming. But as his host did not seem interested in either the beggar or his beard, the subject was dropped.

Next day, with an unnamed hope in his heart that something might happen, Hemming passed the Travers house. But the hope died at sight of it, for it was clearly unoccupied. He remained in town a few days longer, seeking familiar faces in familiar haunts, and finding none to his mind. He thought it strange that romance, and everything worth while, should have deserted the great city in so brief a time. But, for that matter, when he came to think of it, the whole world had lost colour. He decided that he was growing old — and perhaps too wise. After standing the genial publisher a dinner, and receiving a promise of a speedy decision on "Where Might Is Right," he returned to Maidmill-on-Dee, to spend weary months awaiting rumour of war. At last the rumour came, closely followed by sailing orders.

CHAPTER IX.

O'ROURKE TELLS A SAD STORY

Upon his arrival in New York, Hemming called immediately upon Mr. Dodder, in the New York News Syndicate Building on Fulton Street. He found the manager even stouter than at the time of their first meeting, and of a redder countenance. His manner was as cordial as before, but his mood was not so jovial.

"I am always worrying about something or other, and just now it is my health," he told Hemming. "You don't know what I'd give, captain, for a life like yours — and a good hard body like yours. But I can't drop this job now. It's the very devil, I can tell you, to have one's brain and nerves jumping and twanging all the time, while one's carcass lolls about and puts on fat. I'm sorry I was so smart when I was a kid. Otherwise the old man would not have sent me to college, and I'd never have hustled myself into this slavery. My father was a

lumberman, and so was my grandfather. They had big bodies, just like mine, but they lived the right kind of lives for their bodies."

Hemming felt sorry for him. He saw that the gigantic body was at strife with the manner of life to which it was held, and that the same physique that had proved itself a blessing to the lumberman, was a menace to the desk-worker.

"Better take a few months in the woods," he suggested.

Dodder laughed bitterly. "You might just as well advise me to take a few months in heaven," he said.

Hemming asked for news of O'Rourke.

The manager's face lighted.

"O'Rourke," he exclaimed, "is a man wise in his generation. Shackles of gold couldn't hold that chap from his birthright of freedom. He did us some fine work for a time, — rode with Gomez and got his news out somehow or other, — but went under with enteric and left Cuba. We kept him on, of course, but as soon as he could move around again he resigned his position. He said he had some very pressing business affair to see to."

"Is he well again?" asked Hemming, anxiously.

"Oh, yes, he's able to travel," replied Dodder. "He was here only a week ago. He seems to be

making a tour of the Eastern cities. I guess he's looking for something."

"An editor, likely, who has lost some of his manuscripts," remarked Hemming.

"Or a girl," said the other.

"Why a girl?" asked the Englishman.

Dodder smiled pensively. "I like to think so," he said, "for though I am nothing but a corpulent business slave myself, I've a fine active brain for romance, and the heart of a Lochinvar."

Hemming nodded gravely. Dodder laughed at him. "You are thinking what a devilish big horse I need," he said.

They dined together that evening at the Reform Club, and Hemming was amazed at the quantity of food the big man consumed. He had seen O'Rourke, the long, lean, and broad, sit up to some hearty meals after a day in the saddle, but never had he met with an appetite like Dodder's. It was the appetite of his ancestral lumbermen, changed a little in taste, perhaps, but the same in vigour.

War was in order between the United States of America and Spain. General Shafter's army was massing in Tampa, Florida, and Hemming, with letters from the syndicate, started for Washington to procure a pass from the War Office. But on the night before his departure from New York came

news from London of his book, and the first batch of proof-sheets for correction. He worked until far into the morning, and mailed the proofs, together with a letter, before breakfast. Arriving in Washington, he went immediately to the War Department building, and handed in his letters. The clerk returned and asked him to follow to an inner room. There he found a pale young man, with an imposing, closely printed document in his hand.

"Captain Hemming?" inquired the gentleman.

Hemming bowed.

"Your credentials are correct," continued the official, "and the Secretary of War has signed your passport. Please put your name here."

Hemming signed his name on the margin of the document, folded it, and stowed it in a waterproof pocketbook, and bowed himself out. He was about to close the door behind him when the official called him back.

"You forgot something, captain," said the young man, holding a packet made up of about half a dozen letters toward him.

"Not I," replied Hemming. He glanced at the letters, and read on the top one "Bertram St. Ives O'Rourke, Esq."

"O'Rourke," he exclaimed.

"How stupid of me," cried the young man.

"Where is he? When was he here?" inquired Hemming. "He is a particular friend of mine," he added.

The official considered for a second or two.

"Tall chap with a yellow face and a silk hat, isn't he?" he asked.

"Tall enough," replied Hemming, "but he had neither a yellow face nor a silk hat when I saw him last — that was in Jamaica, about a year ago."

At that moment the door opened and O'Rourke entered. Without noticing Hemming he gave a folded paper to the clerk.

"You'll find that right enough," he said — and then his eye lighted upon his old comrade. He grasped the Englishman by the shoulders and shook him backward and forward, grinning all the while a wide, yellow grin.

"My dear chap," protested Hemming, "where have you been to acquire this demonstrative nature?"

"Lots of places. Come and have a drink," exclaimed O'Rourke.

"I'll mail that to your hotel," called the pale young man after them, as they hurried out.

"What are you up to now, my son?" inquired Hemming, critically surveying the other's faultless

attire. "You look no end of a toff, in spite of your yellow face."

"Thanks, and I feel it," replied his friend, "but my release is at hand, for to-night I shall hie me to mine uncle's and there deposit these polite and costly garments. Already my riding-breeches and khaki tunic are airing over the end of my bed."

"But why this grandeur, and this wandering about from town to town?" asked Hemming. He caught the quick look of inquiry on his friend's face. "Dodder told me you'd been aimlessly touring through the Eastern States," he added.

"Here we are — come in and I'll tell you about it," replied O'Rourke. They entered the Army and Navy Club, and O'Rourke, with a very-much-at-home air, led the way to a quiet inner room.

"I suppose we'll split the soda the same old way — as we did before sorrow and wisdom came to us," sighed O'Rourke. He gave a familiar order to the attentive waiter. Hemming looked closely at his companion, and decided that the lightness was only a disguise.

"Tell me the yarn, old boy — I know it's of more than fighting and fever," he said, settling himself comfortably in his chair.

O'Rourke waited until the servant had deposited the glasses and retired. Then he selected two cigars

from his case with commendable care, and, rolling one across the table, lit the other. He inhaled the first draught lazily.

"These are deuced fine cigars," remarked Hemming. O'Rourke nodded his head, and, with his gaze upon the blue drift of smoke, began his story.

"I was in a very bad way when I got out of that infernal island last time. I had a dose of fever that quite eclipsed any of my former experiences in that line — also a bullet-hole in the calf of my left leg. Maybe you noticed my limp, and thought I was feigning gout. A tug brought me back to this country, landing me at Port Tampa. Some patriotic Cubans were waiting for me, and I made the run up to Tampa in a car decorated with flags. I wore my Cuban uniform, you know, and must have looked more heroic than I felt."

Hemming raised his eyebrows at that.

"I'm a major in the Cuban army — the devil take it," explained O'Rourke.

"The patriots escorted me to a hotel," he continued, "but the manager looked at my banana-hued face and refused to have anything to do with me at any price. Failing in this, my tumultuous friends rushed me to a wooden hospital, at the end of a river of brown sand which the inhabitants of that town call an avenue. I was put to bed in the best room

in the place, and then my friends hurried away, each one to find his own doctor to offer me. I was glad of the quiet, for I felt about as beastly as a man can feel without flickering out entirely. I don't think my insides just then would have been worth more than two cents to any one but a medical student. The matron — at least that's what they called her — came in to have a look at me, and ask me questions. She was young, and she was pretty, and her impersonal manner grieved me even then. I might have been a dashed pacifico for all the interest she showed in me, beyond taking my temperature and ordering the fumigation of my clothes. I wouldn't have felt so badly about it if she had not been a lady — but she was, sure enough, and her off-hand treatment very nearly made me forget my cramps and visions of advancing land-crabs. During the next few days I didn't know much of anything. When my head felt a little clearer, the youthful matron brought me a couple of telegrams. I asked her to open them, and read them to me. Evidently my Cuban friends had reported the state of my health, and other things, for both telegrams were tender inquiries after my condition.

"'You seem to be a person of some importance,' she said, regarding me as if I were a specimen in a jar.

"'My name is O'Rourke,' I murmured. For awhile she stared at me in a puzzled sort of way. Suddenly she blushed.

"'I beg your pardon, Mr. O'Rourke,' she said, and sounded as if she meant it. I felt more comfortable, and sucked my ration of milk and lime-water with relish. Next day the black orderly told me that the matron was Miss Hudson, from somewhere up North. He didn't know just where. I gave him a verbal order on the hospital for a dollar.

"Presently Miss Hudson came in and greeted me cheerfully. 'Why do you want Harley to have a dollar?' she asked.

"'Just for a tip,' I replied, wearily.

"'He is paid to do his work, and if some patients fee him, the poorer ones will suffer,' she said.

"'But I want him to have it, please. He told me your name,' I said.

"She paid no more attention to this foolish remark than if I had sneezed. Indeed, even less, for if I had sneezed she would have taken my pulse or my temperature. I watched her as she moved about the room seeing that all was clean and in order.

"'Miss Hudson,' I said, gaining courage, 'will you tell me what is going on in the world? Have you a New York paper?'

"'Yes, some papers have come for you,' she answered, 'and I will read to you for a little while, if you feel strong enough to listen. There is a letter, too. Shall I open it for you?'

"She drew a chair between my bed and the window, and, first of all, examined the letter.

"'From the New York News Syndicate,' she said.

"'Then it's only a check,' I sighed.

"'I shall put it away with the money you had when you came,' she said. She opened a paper, glanced at it, and wrinkled her white brow at me.

"'Are you the Bertram St. Ives O'Rourke?' she asked.

"'No, indeed,' I replied. 'He has been dead a long time. He was an admiral in the British navy.'

"'I have never heard of him,' she answered, 'but there is a man with that name who writes charming little stories, and verses, too, I think.'

"'Oh, that duffer,' I exclaimed, faintly.

"She laughed quietly. 'There is an article about him here — at least I suppose it is the same man.' She glanced down the page and then up at me. 'An angel unawares,' she laughed, and chaffed me kindly about my modesty.

"After that we became better friends every day, though she often laughed at the way some of the

papers tried to make a hero of me. That hurt me, because really I had gone through some awful messes, and been sniped at a dozen times. The Spaniards had a price on my head. I told her that, but she didn't seem impressed. As soon as I was able to see people, my friends the Cuban cigar manufacturers called upon me, singly and in pairs, each with a gift of cigars. These are out of their offerings. The more they did homage to me, the less seriously did Miss Hudson seem to regard my heroism. But she liked me — yes, we were good friends."

O'Rourke ceased talking and pensively flipped the ash off his cigar. Leaning back in his chair, he stared at the ceiling.

"Well?" inquired his friend. O'Rourke returned to the narration of his experience with a visible effort.

"After awhile she read to me, for half an hour or so, every day. One evening she read a ballad of my own; by gad, it was fine. But then, even the *Journal* sounded like poetry when she got hold of it. From that we got to talking about ourselves to each other, and she told me that she had learned nursing, after her freshman year at Vassar, because of a change in her father's affairs. She had come South with a wealthy patient, and, after his recovery, had

accepted the position of matron, or head nurse, of that little hospital. In return, I yarned away about my boyhood, my more recent adventures, my friends, and my ambitions. At last my doctor said I could leave the hospital, but must go North right away. My leg was healed, but otherwise I looked and felt a wreck. I was so horribly weak, and my nights continued so crowded with suffering and delirium, that I feared my constitution was ruined. I tried to keep myself in hand when Miss Hudson was around, but she surely guessed that I loved her."

"What's that?" interrupted Hemming.

"I said that I loved her," retorted O'Rourke, defiantly.

"Go ahead with the story," said the Englishman.

"When the time came for my departure," continued O'Rourke, "and the carriage was waiting at the curb, I just kissed her hand and left without saying a word. I came North and got doctors to examine me. They said that my heart and lungs were right as could be, and that the rest of my gear would straighten up in time. They promised even a return of my complexion with the departure of the malaria from my blood. But I must live a quiet life for awhile, they said; so to begin the quiet life

I returned to Tampa, and that hospital. But I did not find the girl."

"Was she hiding?" inquired Hemming. "Perhaps she had heard some stories to your discredit."

"No," said O'Rourke, "she had resigned, and left the town, with her father. Evidently her troubles were ended — just as mine were begun."

"What did you do about it?" asked Hemming, whose interest was thoroughly aroused.

"Oh, I looked for her everywhere — in Boston, and New York, and Baltimore, and Washington, and read all the city directories," replied the disconsolate lover, "but I do not know her father's first name, and you have no idea what a lot of Hudsons there are in the world."

Hemming discarded the butt of his cigar, and eyed his friend contemplatively.

"I suppose you looked in the registers of the Tampa hotels?" he queried. "The old chap's name and perhaps his address would be there."

O'Rourke started from his chair, with dismay and shame written on his face.

"Sit down and have another," said Hemming; "we'll look it up in a few days."

CHAPTER X.

LIEUTENANT ELLIS IS CONCERNED

By the time Hemming and O'Rourke reached Tampa, about thirty thousand men had gone under canvas in the surrounding pine groves and low-lying waste places. There were Westerners and Easterners, regulars and volunteers, and at Port Tampa a regiment of coloured cavalry. Troops were arriving every day. Colonel Wood and Lieutenant-Colonel Roosevelt, with their splendid command of mounted infantry, had just pitched their shelter-tents in a place of scrub palmetto, behind the big hotel. Taken altogether, it was an army that made Hemming stare.

The friends went to a quiet hotel with wide verandas, cool rooms, open fireplaces, and what proved equally attractive, reasonable rates. They inquired of the clerk about Mr. Hudson. He remembered the gentleman well, though he had spent only two days in the place. "He had a daughter with him,"

the man informed them, and, turning to the front of the register, looked up the name. "There's the signature, sir, and you're welcome to it," he said. The correspondents examined it intently for some time.

"We know that *that* means Hudson," remarked O'Rourke, at last, "and I should guess *John* for the other sprawl."

"Sprawl is good," said Hemming, straightening his monocle, "but any one can see that *Robert* is the name."

"I've put a lot of study on it," said the clerk, "and so has the boss, and we've about agreed to call it *Harold.*"

"Take your choice," said O'Rourke, "but tell me what you make of the address."

"Boston," cried the clerk.

They stared at him. "You were all ready," said Hemming.

"Yes, sir," he replied, "for I've been thinking it over for some time."

"Why the devil didn't you ask him?" inquired O'Rourke, fretfully.

"Lookee here, colonel," said the hotel man, "if you know Mr. Hudson, you know darn well why I didn't ask him where he came from."

"High and haughty?" queried O'Rourke.

The clerk nodded.

"You had better reconsider your course, old chap," laughed the Englishman.

His friend did not reply. He was again intent on the register.

"I make seven letters in it," he said, "and I'll swear to that for an N."

"N nothing," remarked the clerk; "that's a B."

"Yes, it is a B, I think, and to me the word looks like — well, like Balloon," said Hemming.

O'Rourke sighed. "Of course it is New York; see the break in the middle, and a man is more likely to come from there than from a balloon," he said.

"Some men go away in balloons, sir," suggested the clerk.

Just then the proprietor of the hotel entered and approached the desk. He was an imposing figure of a man, tall and deep, and suitably dressed in the roomiest of light tweeds. His face was round and clever. He shook hands with the new arrivals.

"Military men, I believe," he said.

"Not just now," replied Hemming.

"Do you know where Mr. Hudson is at present?" asked O'Rourke, in casual tones.

"Mr. Hudson, of Philadelphia? Why, no, sir, I can't say that I do," answered the big man.

"How do you know he's of Philadelphia?" asked the Englishman.

"He wrote it in the register; look for yourself," was the reply.

"No," said O'Rourke, mournfully, "but it is a very dry evening, and if you will honour us with your company as far as the bar, Mr. — "

"Stillman, — delighted, sir," hastily replied the proprietor.

The three straightway sought that cool retreat, leaving the clerk to brood, with wrinkled brow, above the puzzle so unconsciously donated to him by a respectable one-time guest.

The weary delay in that town of sand and disorder at last came to an end, and Hemming and O'Rourke, with their passports countersigned by General Shafter, went aboard the *Olivette*. Most of the newspaper men were passengers on the same boat. During the rather slow trip, they made many friends and a few enemies. One of the friends was a youth with a camera, sent to take pictures for the same weekly paper which O'Rourke represented. The landing in Cuba of a part of the invading forces and the correspondents was made at Baiquiri, on the southern coast. The woful mismanagement of this landing has been written about often enough. O'Rourke and Hemming, unable to procure horses,

set off toward Siboney on foot, and on foot they went through to Santiago with the ragged, hungry, wonderful army. They did their work well enough, and were thankful when it was over. Hemming admired the American army — up to a certain grade. Part of the time they had a merry Toronto journalist for messmate, a peaceful family man, who wore a round straw hat and low shoes throughout the campaign. During the marching (but not the fighting), O'Rourke happened upon several members of his old command. One of the meetings took place at midnight, when the Cuban warrior was in the act of carrying away Hemming's field-glasses and the Toronto man's blanket.

After the surrender of Santiago, Hemming received word to cover Porto Rico. He started at the first opportunity in a gunboat that had once been a harbour tug. O'Rourke, who was anxious to continue his still hunt for the lady who had nursed him, returned to Florida, and from thence to New York.

In Porto Rico Hemming had an easy and pleasant time. He struck up an acquaintance that soon warmed to intimacy with a young volunteer lieutenant of infantry, by name Ellis. Ellis was a quiet, well-informed youth; in civil life a gentleman-at-large with a reputation as a golfer. With his com-

mand of sixteen men he was stationed just outside of Ponce, and under the improvised canvas awning before his door he and Hemming exchanged views and confidences. One evening, while the red eyes of their green cigars glowed and dimmed in the darkness, Hemming told of his first meeting with O'Rourke. He described the little boat tossing toward them from the vast beyond, the poncho bellied with the wind, and the lean, undismayed adventurer smoking at the tiller. Ellis sat very quiet, staring toward the white tents of his men.

"Is that the same O'Rourke who was once wounded in Cuba, and later nearly died of fever in Tampa?" he asked, when Hemming was through.

"Yes, the same man," said Hemming, "and as decent a chap as ever put foot in stirrup. Do you know him?"

"No, but I have heard a deal about him," replied the lieutenant. It did not surprise Hemming that a man should hear about O'Rourke. Surely the good old chap had worked hard enough (in his own daring, vagrant way) for his reputation. He brushed a mosquito away from his neck, and smoked on in silence.

"I have heard a — a romance connected with your friend O'Rourke," said Ellis, presently, in a

voice that faltered. Hemming pricked up his ears at that.

"So have I. Tell me what you have heard," he said.

"It is not so much what I've heard, as who I heard it from," began the lieutenant, "and it's rather a personal yarn. I met a girl, not long ago, and we seemed to take to each other from the start. I saw her frequently, and I got broken up on her. Then I found out that, though she liked me better than any other fellow in sight, she did not love me one little bit. She admired my form at golf, and considered my conversation edifying, but when it came to love, why, there was some one else. Then she told me about O'Rourke. She had nursed him in Tampa for several months, just before the time old Hudson had recaptured his fortune."

"O'Rourke told me something about it," said Hemming. "He thought, at the time, that he was an invalid for life, so he did not let her know how he felt about her. Afterward the doctors told him he was sound as a bell, and ever since — barring this last Cuban business — he has been looking for her."

"But he does not know that she loves him?" queried Ellis.

"I really couldn't say," replied Hemming.

Ellis shifted his position, and with deft fingers rerolled the leaf of his moist cigar. In a dim sort of way he wondered if he could give up the girl. In time, perhaps, she would love him — if he could keep O'Rourke out of sight. A man in the little encampment began to sing a sentimental negro melody. The clear, sympathetic tenor rang, like a bugle-call, across the stagnant air. A banjo, with its wilful pathos, tinkled and strummed.

"Listen! that is Bolls, my sergeant. He is a member of the Harvard Glee Club," said the lieutenant.

Hemming listened, and the sweet voice awoke the bitter memories. Presently he asked: "What is Miss Hudson's address?"

"She is now in Europe, with her father," replied his companion. "Their home is in Marlow, New York State."

"May I let O'Rourke know?" asked Hemming.

"Certainly," replied Ellis, scarce above a whisper. He wondered what nasty, unsuspected devil had sprung to power within him, keeping him from telling that the home in Marlow was by this time in the hands of strangers, and that the Hudsons intended living in New York after their return from Europe.

O'Rourke had asked Hemming to write to him

now and then, to the Army and Navy Club at Washington, where the letters would be sure to find him sooner or later; so Hemming wrote him the glad information from Porto Rico.

CHAPTER XI.

HEMMING DRAWS HIS BACK PAY

HEMMING walked down Broadway on the morning of a bright November day. The hurrying crowds on the pavements, however weary at heart, looked glad and eager in the sunlight. The stir of the wide street got into his blood, and he stepped along with the air of one bound upon an errand that promised more than money. He entered a cigar store, and filled his case with Turkish cigarettes. Some newspapers lay on the counter, but he turned away from them, for he was sick of news. Further along, he glanced into the windows of a book-shop. His gaze alighted upon the figure of a Turkish soldier. Across the width of the sheet ran the magic words, "Where Might Is Right. A Book of the Greco-Turkish War. By Herbert Hemming."

As one walks in a dream, Hemming entered the shop. "Give me a copy of that book," he said.

"I beg your pardon, sir?" inquired the shopman.

Hemming recovered his wits.

"I want a copy of 'Where Might Is Right,' by Hemming," he said. He laid aside his gloves and stick, and opened the book with loving hands. His first book. The pride of it must have been very apparent on his tanned face, for the man behind the counter smiled.

"I have read that book myself," ventured the man. "I always read a book that I sell more than twenty copies of in one day."

Hemming glowed, and continued his scrutiny of the volume. On one of the first pages was printed, "Authorized American Edition." The name of the publishers was S——'s Sons.

"Where do S——'s Sons hang out?" he asked, as he paid for the book.

"Just five doors below this," said the man.

"I'll look in there," decided Hemming, "before I call on Dodder."

The war correspondent was cordially received by the head of the great publishing house. He was given a comprehensive account of the arrangements made between his London and New York publishers, and these proved decidedly satisfactory. The business talk over, Hemming prepared to go.

"I hope you will look me up again before you leave town," said the head of the firm, as they shook hands.

Arrived in the outer office of the New York News Syndicate, Hemming inquired for Mr. Dodder. The clerk stared at him with so strange an expression that his temper suffered.

"Well, what the devil is the matter?" he exclaimed.

"Mr. Dodder is dead," replied the youth. Just then Wells came from an inner room, caught sight of the Englishman, and approached.

"So you're back, are you?" he remarked, with his hands in his pockets. Hemming was thinking of the big, kind-hearted manager, and replied by asking the cause of his death. "Apoplexy. Are you ready to sail for the Philippines? Why didn't you wait in Porto Rico for orders?" he snapped.

"Keep cool, my boy," said Hemming's brain to Hemming's heart. Hemming himself said, with painful politeness: "I can be ready in two days, Mr. Wells, but first we must make some new arrangements as to expenses and salary."

"Do you think you are worth more than you get?" sneered Wells. "Has that book that you wrote, when we were paying you to do work for us, given you a swelled head?"

Hemming was about to reply when an overgrown young man, a bookkeeper, who had been listening, nudged his elbow roughly.

"Here's your mail," he said.

Hemming placed the half-dozen letters in his pocket. His face was quite pale, considering the length of time he had been in the tropics. He took the overgrown youth by the front of his jacket and shook him. Then he twirled him deftly and pushed him sprawling against his enraged employer. Both went down, swearing viciously. The other inmates of the great room stared and waited. Most of them looked pleased. An office boy, who had received notice to leave that morning, sprang upon a table. "Soak it to 'em, Dook. Soak it to 'em, you bang-up Chawley. Dey can't stand dat sort o' health food."

Wells got to his feet. The bookkeeper scrambled up and rushed at Hemming. He was received in a grip that made him repent his action.

"Mr. Wells," said Hemming, "I shall hold on to this gentleman, who does not seem to know how to treat his superiors, until he cools off, and in the meantime I'll trouble you for what money is due me, up to date. Please accept my resignation at the same time."

"I'll call a copper," sputtered Wells.

The door opened, and the head of the publishing house of S——'s Sons entered.

"Good Lord, what is the trouble?" he cried.

"I am trying to draw my pay," explained Hemming.

The new arrival looked at the ruffled, confused Wells with eyes of contempt and suspicion.

"I'll wait for you, Mr. Hemming, on condition that you will lunch with me," he cried.

A few minutes later they left the building, and in his pocket Hemming carried a check for the sum of his back pay.

"In a month from now," said his companion, "that concern will not be worth as much as your check is written for. Even poor old Dodder had all he could do to hold it together. He had the brains and decency, and that fellow had the money."

By the time lunch was over, Hemming found himself once more in harness, but harness of so easy a fit that not a buckle galled. The billet was a roving commission from S——'s Sons to do articles of unusual people and unusual places for their illustrated weekly magazine. He spent the afternoon in reading and writing letters. He advised every one with whom he had dealings of his new headquarters. He had a good collection of maps, and sat up until three in the morning pondering over them. Next day he bought himself a camera, and overhauled his outfit. By the dawn of the third

day after his separation from the syndicate, he had decided to start northward, despite the season.

The clamour of battle was no longer his guide. Now the Quest of the Little-Known was his. It brought him close to many hearths, and taught him the hearts of all sorts and conditions of men. In the span of a few years, it made him familiar with a hundred villages between Nain in the North and Rio de Janeiro in the South. He found comfort under the white lights of strange cities, and sought peace in various wildernesses. Under the canvas roof and the bark, as under the far-shining shelters of the town, came ever the dream of his old life for bedfellow.

END OF PART I.

PART TWO

CHAPTER I.

THE UNSUSPECTED CITY

HEMMING happened upon the city of Pernamba on the evening of a sultry day in April. He manifested no surprise beyond straightening his monocle in his eye.

"Hope they have some English soda-water down there," he said to the heavy foliage about him, "but I suppose it would be hardly fair to expect an ice factory so far from the coast." For a second a vision of tall glasses and ice that clinked came to his mind's eye. He remembered the cool dining-rooms of his friends in Pernambuco. He spurred his native-bred steed to a hesitating trot along the narrow, hoof-worn path that led down to the valley. At a mud and timber hut set beneath banana-trees, and backed by a tiny field, he drew rein. A woman sat before the door, looking cool and at ease in her scanty cotton dress. A naked child chased a pig among the bananas. Hemming greeted the woman

in Portuguese. She gave him humble greeting in return. The pig and the baby came near to listen. Hemming swung his feet free from the stirrups, to straighten the kink out of his knees. He pushed back his pith helmet, and lit a cigarette.

"What is the name of the town?" he asked, smiling reassuringly.

The woman told him, standing respectfully on the earthen threshold. Such square shoulders and clear eyes as this Englishman's were not every-day sights in Pernamba.

"May a stranger find entertainment there?" he inquired.

"Yes," she replied, "and the great man who owns it is generous to strangers. He is a big man, full of wisdom, smoking eternally a yellow cigar not of this country."

Hemming dismounted, the better to rest his horse. Although he had ridden all that day and the day before, he felt no fatigue himself. The tropical sun, the narrow water-cut paths, and the clambering vines held in the heated air and luring him with strange flowers, brought him no terror. But he polished his monocle and sighed uneasily, for his store of *milreis* had dwindled since leaving Pernambuco a week before to a sum equalling about eleven pounds in English money.

"Has this man an army?" he asked.

"Truly a great army," replied the woman, "for I have seen it myself, riding after thieves. It numbers five hundred men, all armed, and wearing white tunics, and all paid for by this man. He must be richer than a king to support so grand an army."

Hemming smiled toward the white and red roofs and clumps of foliage in the valley, thinking, maybe, of his own old regiment, of Aldershot during a review, of the hill batteries that had supported the infantry advance in India, and of the fifty regiments under canvas in Tampa.

"I crave a drink," he said, — "a finger of your good casash in a bowl of cool water."

The woman brought it, smiling with hospitality, and would not accept the ragged bill which he held out to her.

"It is a pleasure," cried she, "to slake the thirst of so distinguished a señor."

Hemming bowed gravely, a smile lifting his upturned, pale moustache. The baby came close, on all fours, and examined his yellow riding-boots and straight spurs. Hemming patted the small one's limp black hair.

"This is a kindly world," he said in English, then to the woman: "Let thy son wear this ring, — see, it fits his thumb. Should any man ask the

name of his friend, say it is Hemming, an Englishman."

He pushed the child gently toward its mother, and, swinging to his saddle, rode down toward the city. His gray eyes took in everything, — the yellowing fruit, the fields of cane, the mud huts of the poor, the thin horses of the charcoal-burners crowding out of the trail to let him pass, and the patches of manioc.

All this he beheld with satisfaction. In a thin book he made a note, thus: "Pernamba, name of town evidently run by a governor of independent spirit. Army of 500, evidently mounted infantry. Welcomed to outskirts of city by kind peasant woman, evening of April 6, 19—. Same climate and crops as rest of Brazil. Eleven pounds in my pockets in Brazilian notes and small coin. What does Pernamba hold for H. H. I wonder? A dinner or two, perhaps, and a couple of chapters for my book."

Presently the twisting path met a highway between royal palms. Good-sized villas, their walls all blue and white with glazed tiles, their roofs dusky red, or else flat and railed about with white stones, each in its separate garden. The gardens were enclosed by high walls of brick, such as he had seen many times in the resident sections of Pernambuco.

For months he had lived in just such a house, and lolled in just such a garden.

"The old Dutch influence," he said, tossing his cigarette over the nearest wall. A bullock-cart came creaking along the road, the patient cattle, with heads held low and a straight yoke across their wrinkled necks, the driver walking at their heels, sombre with dust, and daintily puffing a cigarette. The cart was loaded with sacks of sugar, which sent up a heavy, sickly smell. Hemming hailed the driver.

"Where does the governor live, my friend?"

"The President, señor? There behind the white panthers." With the stock of his rawhide whip, the fellow pointed to an iron gate, set between posts of red brick, topped with marble panthers. Each panther held a shield between its front paws. Hemming threw the bullock-driver a coin, and rode on the pavement, the better to examine the armorial design on the shields. He laughed softly.

"Familiar," he said, "ah, yes, a good enough old Devonshire shield. I have admired it in the dining-room of the Governor of Newfoundland. Now I doff my hat to it at the entrance of a president's residence. Dash it all, I have outgrown dismay, and a jolly good thing, too." He flecked a leaf off his knee with the tip of his glove.

"Queer I never heard about this before, — and what the deuce is a Brazilian doing with those arms? Can this be where that crazy American whom old Farrington told me about hangs out?" His brow cleared, and he bowed to the expressionless panthers.

A sentry, who had been standing a few paces off, with a cavalry sabre at his shoulder and a cigarette in his mouth, now drew near and saluted. Hemming returned the salute sharply. This same custom of smoking on sentry-go had jarred on him many a time in Pernambuco. He had noticed the same thing in Bahia.

"I would see the President," he said, and passed his card to the soldier. From a small guard-house just inside the wall came several more white-clad men. One of these hurried away with Hemming's card, and presently returned. The gates were swung wide open; Hemming rode in at a dress-parade trot, travel-stained, straight of back, his monocle flashing in his eye. Soldiers posted here and there among the palms and roses and trim flower-beds stood at attention as he passed.

He drew rein and dismounted at the foot of the marble steps. A tall, heavily built man, dressed in a black frock coat and white trousers, came down to meet him. A man in livery took his horse.

"Mr. Hemming," said the large man, "I am the President." He popped a fat, yellow cigar into his mouth, and shook hands. "Come in," he said. He led the way into a large tiled room, containing a billiard-table of the American kind, a roll-top desk, and an office chair. The windows of the room were all on one side, and opened on a corner of the gardens, in which a fountain tossed merrily. The President sank into a chair in the easiest manner, and threw one leg over the arm of it. Then he noticed, with a quick twinkle in his blue eyes, Hemming in the middle of the floor, erect and unsmiling.

"Mr. Hemming," he said, "I want your respect, but none of that stiff-backed ceremony between gentlemen. I am neither Roosevelt nor Albert Edward. Even Morgan is a bigger man than I am, though I still hope. You have been in the English army, and you like to have things starched; well, so do I sometimes. Please fall into that chair."

Hemming blushed and sat down. The man was evidently crazy. "My name is Tetson," said the President. He rang the bell and a native servant entered.

"Thank you, a Scotch and soda," said Hemming.

"Ah, I knew it," laughed the other, "though I always take rye myself."

The servant bowed and retired.

"I see the illustrated weeklies of both New York and London," continued Tetson, "and I always look for your articles. I like them. I know something about your family, also, Hemming. I have 'Burke's Landed Gentry' and 'Who's Who' on my desk. You are a grandson of Sir Bertram Hemming of Barracker."

"Yes," replied Hemming, both surprised and embarrassed.

"Well," said the President, "I have some blood in me, too. My mother's grandmother was a Gostwycke. Did you notice the three stars and six choughs?"

"I know the head of your house at home, Colonel Bruce-Gostwycke, and another distinguished member of it in the colonies, Sir Henry Renton," replied Hemming. "But," he continued, briskly, twisting his moustache, "you are something bigger than that here. Why do you hold this little half-dead county family so high?"

"My mother in New York taught me to," replied Tetson, "and then this business is different. I did it, as you Englishmen say, off my own bat. A pile of money, a lot of gall, a little knowledge of the weakness of men in office, — this is all about it. Even now most of my friends think me a fool." He gravely relit his yellow cigar. The reek of

it was worse than jerked beef to Hemming. "I will tell you my story some day, but now you want a shower-bath and a change. Please consider yourself at home. Sudden friendships may not be good form in England, but they are all right back here."

"Ah," said Hemming, "I have brushed about a bit; I'm not such a — so English as I look."

Tetson turned to the servant: "Tell Smith to look after Mr. Hemming. Smith is a handy man. You will find all kinds of cigarettes in his keeping, and we shall dine at eight. If you feel hungry in the meantime, tell Smith."

He arose and shook hands. Hemming followed the servant, inwardly wondering, outwardly calm. He had met many strange people in his adventurous life, and had become accustomed to luck of every kind, but this big President, with the yellow cigar, was beyond anything he had ever dreamed.

"I am glad I was born with imagination, and have enjoyed the enlightening society of O'Rourke in so many strange places," he thought.

Smith proved to be a clean-shaven man, all in white and brass buttons. Hemming surveyed him with interest.

"I see that you are an Englishman, Smith," he said.

"No, sir," replied Smith, in faultless tones. "I

was born on the Bowery. But I have been in London, sir, yes, sir, with Mr. Tetson. We haven't always lived in this 'ere 'ole."

It seemed to Hemming that the h's had been dropped with a certain amount of effort on the man's part, and that his eyes twinkled in a quite uncalled-for way. But it did not bother him now. Even a valet may be allowed his joke.

Soon he was enjoying the luxury of a shower-bath in a great, cool room, standing by itself in a vineyard and rose garden. The shower fell about six feet before it touched his head. The roof of the building was open to the peak, and a subdued light, leaf-filtered, came down through a glass tile set in among the earthen ones. The walls and floor were of white and blue tiles. The bath was of marble, as large as an English billiard-table, and not unlike the shallow basin of a fountain.

Cool and vigorous, Hemming stepped from the bath, replaced his eye-glass, and lit a cigarette. Swathed in a white robe, with his feet in native slippers, he unlocked the door and issued into the scented garden air. Smith awaited him in the vine-covered alley, holding a "swizzle" on a silver tray. He drained the glass, and, lifting up the hem of his robe, followed the valet back to the dressing-room. Chameleons darted across his path, and through

the palms floated the ringing notes of a bugle-call.

"I found your razors and your brushes in the saddle-bags," announced Smith, "and these shirts, sir, I bought, guessing at your size, and — "

"What is this?" interrupted Hemming, holding aloft a white jacket heavy with gold.

"Mess jacket of our regiment, sir. The President would feel honoured if you would wear it. And these trousers were sent in by one of the native officers, with his compliments," replied the valet.

Hemming curtly intimated his readiness to dress. Smith closed the shutters, turned on the lights, and examined a couple of razors.

Twenty minutes later, Herbert Hemming, in the mess uniform of a colonel in the President of Pernamba's army, was ushered into the presence of the family, and a certain Mr. Valentine Hicks.

CHAPTER II.

THE SPORTING PRESIDENT

THE President's name was Harris William Tetson. His wife had been Mary Appleton, born of cultured parents in Philadelphia. She welcomed Hemming in the most friendly manner. The third member of the family was a tall girl, with a soft voice and an English accent. She shook hands with Hemming, and he noticed that the pressure of her hand was firm and steady, like that of a man's. She wore glasses. The light from the shaded candles glowed warm on her white neck and arms. Hemming had not expected to find any one like this in the interior of South America. He used to know girls like her at home, and one in particular flashed into his memory with a pang of bitterness. In his agitation, he almost overlooked the extended hand of Mr. Valentine Hicks.

The dinner was of great length. A few of the dishes were American, but most were of the country.

Two dusky servants waited upon the diners. The claret was to Hemming's taste, and, as he listened to Miss Tetson describe an incident of her morning's ride, a feeling of rest and homeliness came to him. A little wind stole in from the roses and fountains, and the man of wars and letters, great dreams and unsung actions, saw, with wondering eyes, that it loosened a red petal from the roses at her shoulder and dropped it upon her white arm. He looked up sharply, and only the light of genial friendship remained in the eyes that met those of Valentine Hicks. But Hicks looked sulky; understanding came to the heart of Hemming. At last the dinner came to an end, and Tetson dropped the subject of freight on sugar, and took up the lighter one of real estate. Coffee was brought; no one listened to Tetson, but he prosed on, his good-natured face turned toward the shadows in the ceiling, a yellow cigar stuck jauntily in his mouth. Hemming was busy with his own thoughts, wondering into what nest of lunatics his free-lancing had brought him. He longed for O'Rourke's help. The girl drew something from her bodice, and laid it before him. It was a cigarette-case.

"You may take one, if you do not bore us by looking shocked," she said.

Hemming drew forth a cigarette, and lit it at the

nearest candle. "As to being shocked," he replied, "why, I used to know a girl who — " he stopped suddenly and glanced down at his coffee. "Of course it is quite the thing now," he added, in stilted tones.

Hicks refused a cigarette from the silver case, and moodily puffed at a black native cigar. Mrs. Tetson did not smoke, but entertained the others with a description of her first and only attempt at the recreation.

The little wind died away. Outside, the fountain splashed sleepily. The blood-red petal fell from the girl's arm to the whiter cloth. A flame-bewildered moth bungled into the President's coffee. Hemming's workaday brain was lulled to repose, and now he was only Hemming the poet. He looked into the eyes across the table. But he had lived so long with men, and the foolish, evident affairs of generals and statesmen, that Miss Tetson's glances were as weapons for which he knew no manual of defence. They touched him more than he liked, awaking in his hitherto disciplined memory a hundred fibres of broken dreams. And every fibre tingled like a nerve with a sweetness sharp as pain, — and time swung back, and all the healing of his long exile was undone.

When the ladies rose from the table, Mr. Tetson

came over to Hemming and nudged him confidentially. He looked very sly. "What d'ye say to a game of billiards?" he whispered.

"Delighted," murmured Hemming, relieved that his strange host had not suggested something worse.

"I like the game," continued Tetson, "but as Hicks is a damn fool at it, I don't indulge very often. Hicks is too young, anyway, — a nice fellow, but altogether too young for men to associate with. Trotting 'round with the girls is more in his line."

"Really," remarked the newcomer, uneasily. He was not quite sure whether or not Hicks had got out of ear-shot.

"Fact," said the President, — "cold truth. Marion can't play, either. I've had Santosa up several times for a game, but he's too dashed respectful to beat me. You'll not be that way, Hemming?"

"I should hope not," replied Hemming, absently, his eyes still turned toward the door through which the rest of the party had vanished.

"What d'ye say to five dollars the game?" Tetson whispered. The adventurer's heart sank, but he followed his host to the billiard-room with an unconcerned air. They played until past midnight, the President in his shirt-sleeves, with the yellow

cigar smouldering always. A servant marked for them, and another uncorked the soda-water. After the last shot had been made, Valentine Hicks strolled in, with his hands in his pockets and his brow clouded.

"Did the old man do you?" he inquired of Hemming.

The free-lance shook his head. "I took ten pounds away from him," he said.

The secretary whistled.

CHAPTER III.

THE POST OF HONOUR. — THE SECRETARY'S AFFAIR

HEMMING awoke with a clear head, despite the President's whiskey, and remembered, with satisfaction, the extra ten pounds. His windows were wide open, and a cool dawn wind came in across the gardens. He threw aside the sheet and went over to the middle window, and, finding that the ledge extended to form a narrow balcony, stepped outside. Away to the right, he could mark a bend of the river by the low-lying mist. He sniffed the air. "There is fever in it," he said, and wondered how many kinds of a fool Mr. Tetson was. He was sorry for the ladies. They did not look like the kind of people to enjoy being shut away from the world in such a God-forsaken hole as this. Why didn't the old ass start a town on the coast? he asked himself. While engaged in these puzzling reflections, Smith rapped at the door, and entered. He carried coffee, a few slices of dry toast, and a jug of shaving-water.

"Will you ride this morning, sir?" he asked.

"Why, yes," replied Hemming, and said he would be shaved before drinking his coffee. As the valet lathered his chin, he asked if the President rode every morning.

"Not 'e, sir," replied the man, "but Miss Tetson does, and Mr. 'Icks."

Hemming found his well-worn riding-breeches brushed and folded, his boots and spurs shining like the sun, and a new cotton tunic ready for him. He looked his surprise at sight of the last article.

"You didn't give me any order, sir," explained the man, "but, bein' as I'm a bit of a tilor myself, I thought as 'ow you wouldn't mind — "

Hemming interrupted him with uplifted hand.

"It was very kind of you," he said, "and I am sure it is an excellent fit. See if you can't find a sovereign among that change on the table."

As he rode through the great gates, Hemming caught sight of Miss Tetson along the road. At sound of his horse's hoofs, she turned in her saddle and waved her hand. He touched his little white stallion into that renowned sliding run that had made it famous in Pernambuco. They rode together for over an hour. Hicks did not turn out that morning.

Mr. Valentine Hicks was young, and an Ameri-

can. Though he had been born in Boston, he lacked something in breeding, — a very shadowy something that would correct itself as life took him in hand. Though he had been an undergraduate of Harvard University for two years, he displayed to Hemming's mind a childish ignorance of men and books. No doubt he had practised the arts of drop-kicking and tackling with distinction, for he was big and well muscled. He was distantly connected with the Tetsons, and had joined them in Pernamba soon after their arrival in the country, and two years previous to the opening of this narrative, to act as Tetson's private secretary. At first Mr. Hicks looked with suspicion upon the wandering Englishman. He was in an unsettled frame of mind at the time, poor fellow. He saw in Hemming a dangerous rival to his own monopoly of Miss Tetson. Already the lady was talking about some sort of book the duffer had written.

A few days after Hemming's arrival, the army, to the number of four hundred rank and file and twenty-six officers, was drawn up for the President's inspection. Hemming rode with Tetson, and the little brown soldiers wondered at the frosty glitter of his eye-glass. His mount was the same upon which he had entered the country, — a white, native-bred stallion, the gift of one McPhey, a merchant

in Pernambuco. Miss Tetson and Hicks, each followed by a groom, trotted aimlessly about the waiting ranks, much to Hemming's disgust. Tetson lit the inevitable yellow weed.

"What do you think of them?" he asked, waving his hand toward the troops.

"They look to me as if they were stuffed with bran," answered the Englishman, "and their formation is all wrong."

"Ah," said Tetson, sadly crestfallen.

Presently he touched Hemming's knee.

"If you will take them in hand, — the whole lopsided consignment, from the muddy-faced colonel down, — why, I'll be your everlasting friend," he said.

Hemming stared at them, pondering.

"It will mean enemies for me," he replied.

"No, I can answer for everything but their drill," said the other.

Hemming saluted, and, wheeling the white stallion, rode alone up and down the uneven ranks. His face was set in severe lines, but behind the mask lurked mirth and derision at the pettiness of his high-styled office.

"Commander-in-chief," he said, and, putting his mount to a canter, completely circled his command in a fraction of a minute.

"I shall begin to lick them into shape to-morrow," he said to Tetson.

The little officers, clanging their big cavalry sabres, marched their little brown troops away to the barracks. The President looked wistfully after them, and said: "I can mount three hundred of them, Hemming. I call it a pretty good army, for all its lack of style."

"I call it half a battalion of duffers," said Hemming to himself.

Later, the new commander-in-chief and the private secretary sat together in the former's quarters.

"I do not quite understand this Pernamba idea," said Hemming. "Is it business, or is it just an unusual way of spending money?"

"I don't know what the old man is driving at myself," replied Hicks, "but of one thing I am sure: there's more money put into it than there is in it. The army is a pretty expensive toy, for instance. Just what it is for I do not know. The only job it ever tried was collecting rents, and it made a mess of that. We don't sell enough coffee in a year to stand those duffers a month's pay. We get skinned right and left back here and down on the coast. Mr. Tetson thinks he still possesses a clear business head, but the fact is he cannot understand his own bookkeeping. It's no fun running a hun-

dred-square-mile ranch, with a fair-sized town thrown in."

Hemming wrinkled his forehead, and stared vacantly out of the window. Below him a gray parrot, the property of Miss Tetson, squawked in an orange-tree.

"If I had money, I should certainly live somewhere else. Why the devil he keeps his wife and daughter here, I don't see."

Just then the secretary caught the faint strumming of a banjo, and left hurriedly, without venturing an explanation. He found Miss Tetson in her favourite corner of the garden, where roses grew thickest, and breadfruit-trees made a canopy of green shade. A fountain splashed softly beside the stone bench whereon she sat, and near by stood a little brown crane watching the water with eyes like yellow jewels.

The girl had changed from her riding-habit into a white gown, such as she wore almost every day. But now Hicks saw her with new eyes. She seemed to him more beautiful than he had dreamed a woman could be. Yesterday he had thought, in his indolent way, that he loved her. Now he knew it, and his heart seemed to leap and pause in a mad sort of fear. The look of well-fed satisfaction passed away from him. He stood there between the

roses like a fool, — he who had come down to the garden so carelessly, with some jest on his lips.

"Something will happen now," she said, and smiled up at him. Hicks wondered what she meant.

"It is too hot to have anything happen," he replied.

"That is the matter with us, — it is too hot, always too hot, and we are too tired," she said, "but Mr. Hemming does not seem to mind the heat. I think that something interesting will happen now."

This was like a knife in the man's heart, for he was learning to like the Englishman.

The girl looked at the little crane by the fountain. Hicks stood for a moment, trying to smile. But it was hard work to look as if he did not care. "Lord, what an ass I have been," he said to himself, but aloud he stammered something about their rides together, and their friendship.

"Oh, you can ride very well," she laughed, "but — "

She did not finish the remark, and the secretary, after a painful scrutiny of the silent banjo in her lap, went away to the stables and ordered his horse. But a man is a fool to ride hard along the bank of a Brazilian river in the heat of the afternoon.

From one of the windows of his cool room, Hemming watched the departure of the President's pri-

vate secretary. He remembered what Tetson had said of the boy, — "too young to associate with men."

But youth is a thing easily mended, thought Hemming. Somehow — perhaps only in size — Hicks recalled O'Rourke to his mind; and back to him came the days of their good-comradeship. He wondered where O'Rourke was now, and what he was busy about. He had seen him last in Labrador, where they had spent a month together, salmon fishing, and up to that time O'Rourke had found no trace of Miss Hudson. Ellis's information had proved useless. Disgusted at the deception practised upon him, the poor fellow had ceased to speak of the matter, even with his dearest friend during night-watches by the camp-fire.

CHAPTER IV.

THE THING THAT HAPPENED

Hicks came along the homeward road at dusk. Lights were glowing above the strong walls and behind the straight trunks of the palms. A mist that one might smell lay along the course of the river. Hicks rode heavily and with the air of one utterly oblivious to his surroundings. But at the gateway of the officers' mess he looked up. Captain Santosa was in the garden, a vision of white and gold and dazzling smile. He hurried to the gate.

"Ah, my dear Hicks, you are in time for our small cocktails, and then dinner. But for this riding so hard, I can call you nothing but a fool."

"Thanks very much," replied the American, dismounting slowly, "and as to what you call me, old man, I'm not at all particular." The woebegone expression of his plump face was almost ludicrous.

Santosa whistled, and presently an orderly came

and took Valentine's horse. The two entered the building arm in arm, and the secretary swayed as he walked.

Five or six of the native officers were already in the mess-room, swallowing mild swizzles, and talking quietly. They greeted Hicks affectionately.

"This man," said Santosa, "had his horse looking like a shaving-brush, and I know nothing in English so suitable to call him as this," and he swore vigorously in Portuguese.

"Stow that rot," said Hicks, "can't you see I'm fit as a fiddle; and for Heaven's sake move some liquor my way, will you?" His request was speedily complied with, and he helped himself recklessly from the big decanter.

The dinner was long and hot, and Valentine Hicks, forgetting utterly his Harvard manner, dropped his head on the table, between his claret-glass and coffee-cup, and dreamed beastly dreams. The swarthy Brazilians talked and smoked, and sent away the decanters to be refilled. The stifling air held the tobacco smoke above the table. The cotton-clad servants moved on noiseless feet.

"These Americans, — dear heaven," spoke a fat major, softly.

"I am fond of Hicks," said Santosa, laying his hand on the youth's unconscious shoulder. A

slim lieutenant, who had held a commission in a Brazilian regiment stationed in Rio, looked at the captain.

"The Americans are harmless," he said. "They mind their own business, — or better still, they let us mind it for them. The President — bah! And our dear Valentine. If he gets enough to eat, and clothes cut in the English way, and some one to listen to his little stories of how he used to play golf at Harvard, he is content. But this Englishman, — this Señor Hemming, — he is quite different."

"Did not you at one time play golf?" asked Santosa, calmly.

"Three times, in Florida," replied the lieutenant, "and with me played a lady, who talked at her ease and broke two clubs in one morning. She was of a fashionable convent named Smith, but this did not deter her from the free expression of her thoughts."

"Stir up Señor Hicks, that we may hear two fools at the same time," said the colonel.

"Take my word for it, colonel, that Valentine is not a fool," said Santosa, lightly. "He is very young."

"Have you nothing to say for me?" asked the slim lieutenant, good-naturedly.

"You know what I think of you all," replied Santosa, without heat. The conversation was carried on in Portuguese, and now ran into angry surmises as to the President's reason for placing Hemming in command.

It was close upon midnight when Hicks awoke. He straightened himself in his chair and blinked at Santosa, who alone, of the whole mess, remained at table.

"You have had a little nap," said the Brazilian.

Hicks looked at him for awhile in silence. Then he got to his feet, and leaned heavily on the table.

"I'll walk home, old tea-cosey. Tell your nigger to give my gee something to eat, will you?"

"You do not look well, my dear Valentine. You had better stay here until morning," said Santosa.

Hicks swore, and then begged the other's pardon.

"Am I drunk, old chap? Do I look that way?" he asked.

Captain Santosa laughed. "You look like a man with a grudge against some one," he answered. "Perhaps you have a touch of fever, otherwise I know you would have good taste enough to conceal the grudge. A gentleman suffers — and smiles."

It was past two o'clock in the morning, and Hemming was lying flat on his back, smoking a cigarette in the dark. He had been writing verses,

and letters which he did not intend to mail, until long past midnight. And now he lay wide-eyed on his bed, kept awake by the restless play of his thoughts.

His windows were all open, and he could hear a stirring of wind in the crests of the taller trees. His reveries were disturbed by a stumbling of feet in the room beyond, and suddenly Valentine Hicks stood in the doorway. By the faint light Hemming made out the big, drooping shoulders and the attitude of weariness. He sat up quickly, and pushed his feet into slippers.

"That you, Hicks?" he asked.

"Don't talk to me, you damn traitor!" said Hicks.

Hemming frowned, and tossed his cigarette into the night.

"If you will be so good as to turn on the light, I'll get the quinine," he said.

The secretary laughed.

"Quinine!" he cried; "you fool! I believe an Englishman would recommend some blasted medicine to a man in hell."

"You're not there yet," replied Hemming. He was bending over an open drawer of his desk, feeling about among papers and bottles for the box

of pills. Hicks drew something from his pocket and laid it softly on the table.

"Good morning," he said. "I intended to kick up a row but I've changed my mind. Hand over your pills and I'll go to bed."

When he awoke next day, it was only to a foolish delirium. The doctor looked at him, and then at Hemming.

"I suppose you can give it a name," he said.

Hemming nodded.

"I've had it myself," he replied.

The President, followed by his daughter, came into the room. Hicks recognized the girl.

"Marion," he said, and when she bent over him, "something has happened after all."

She looked up at Hemming with a colourless face. Her eyes were brave enough, but the pitiful expression of her mouth touched him with a sudden painful remembrance. During the hours of daylight the doctor and Miss Tetson watched by the bedside, moving silently and speaking in whispers in the darkened room.

The doctor was an Englishman somewhat beyond middle age, with a past well buried. In the streets and on the trail his manner was short almost to rudeness. He often spoke bitterly and lightly of those things which most men love and respect. In

the sick-room, be it in the rich man's villa or in the mud hut of the plantation labourer, he spoke softly, and his hands were gentle as a woman's.

Hemming had been working with his little army all day, and, after dining at the mess, he changed and relieved Miss Tetson and the doctor. Before leaving the room, the girl turned to him nervously.

"Did you see Valentine last night?" she asked.

Hemming told her that Hicks had come to his room for quinine.

"Good night, and please take good care of him," she said.

The Englishman screwed his eye-glass into place, and glared at her uneasily. "Hicks is a good sort," he said, "but he is not the kind for this country. Neither are you, Miss Tetson. But it's nuts for me, — this playing soldier at another man's expense."

He paused, and she waited, a little impatiently, for him to go on. "What I wanted to say," he continued, "is that there is one thing that goes harder with a man than yellow fever. I — ah — have experienced both. Hicks is a decent chap," he concluded, lamely.

Miss Tetson smiled and held out her hand.

"If he should want me in the night, please call me. I will not be asleep," she said.

Hemming, for all his rolling, had gathered a good

deal of moss in the shape of handiness and out-of-the-way knowledge. Twice during the night he bathed the sick man with ice and alcohol. Many times he lifted the burning head and held water to the hot lips. Sometimes he talked to him, very low, of the North and the blue sea, and thus brought sleep back to the glowing eyes. The windows were open and the blinds up, and a white moon walked above the gardens.

Just before dawn, Hemming dozed for a few minutes in his chair. He was awakened by some movement, and, opening his eyes, beheld Miss Tetson at the bedside. Hicks was sleeping, with his tired face turned toward the window. The girl touched his forehead tenderly with her lips.

Hemming closed his eyes again, and kept them so until he heard her leave the room, — a few light footsteps and a soft trailing of skirts. Then, in his turn, he bent above the sleeper.

"If this takes you off, old chap, perhaps it will be better," he said.

But in his inmost soul he did not believe this bitter distrust of women that his own brain had built up for him out of memory and weariness.

CHAPTER V.

CHANCE IN PERNAMBUCO

WHILE Hicks tossed about in his fever dreams, and Hemming shook his command into form, away on the coast, in the city of Pernambuco, unusual things were shaping. From the south, coastwise from Bahia, came Bertram St. Ives O'Rourke. This was chance, pure and simple, for he had no idea of Hemming's whereabouts. From New York, on the mail-steamer, came a man called Cuddlehead, and took up his abode in a narrow hotel near the water-front. He arrived in the city only an hour behind O'Rourke. He was artfully attired in yachting garb, and had been king-passenger on the boat, where his English accent had been greatly admired, and his predilection for card-playing had been bountifully rewarded. In fact, when he went ashore with his meagre baggage, he left behind at least one mourning maiden heart and three empty pockets.

O'Rourke, upon landing, had his box and three leather bags carried across the square to the ship-

chandler's. He would look about before engaging a room, and see if the place contained enough local colour to pay for a stop-over. He fell, straightway, into easy and polite conversation with the owner of the store. From the busy pavement and dirty square outside arose odours that were not altogether foreign to his cosmopolitan nose. Three men greeted one another, and did business in English and Portuguese, speaking of the cane crop, the rate of exchange, the price of Newfoundland "fish," and of gales met with at sea. Bullock-carts creaked past in the aching sunlight, the mild-eyed beasts staggering with lowered heads. Soldiers in uncomfortable uniforms lounged about. Cripples exhibited their ugly misfortunes, and beggars made noisy supplication.

O'Rourke decided that there was enough local colour to keep him, and, turning from the open door, contemplated the interior of the establishment. The place was dim and cool, and at the far back of it another door stood open, on a narrow cross-street. Cases of liquor, tobacco, tea, coffee, and condensed milk were piled high against the wall. Baskets of sweet potatoes and hens' eggs stood about. Upon shelves behind the counter samples of rope, canvas, and cotton cloth were exhibited. Highly coloured posters, advertising Scotch whiskey, brightened the

gloom. The back part of the shop was furnished with a bar and two long tables. At one of the tables sat about a dozen men, each with a glass before him, and all laughing, talking, swearing, and yet keeping their eyes attentively fixed on one of their number, who shook a dice-box.

O'Rourke, who had by this time made his name known to the ship-chandler, was given a general introduction to the dice-throwers. He called for a lime-squash, and took a seat at the table between a dissipated-looking individual whom all addressed by the title of " Major," and a master-mariner from the North. There were several of these shellback skippers at table, and O'Rourke spotted them easily enough, though, to the uninitiated, they had nothing in common but their weather-beaten faces. Their manners were of various degrees, running from the height of civility around to nothing at all. There was the first officer of a Liverpool " tramp " with his elbows on the board, his gin-and-bitters slopped about, and his voice high in argument. Next him sat a mariner from one of the Fundy ports, nodding and starting, and trying to bury in whiskey remembrance of his damaged cargo and unseaworthy ship. Nearer sat a Devonshire man in the Newfoundland trade, drinking his sweetened claret with all the graces of a curate, and talking with the

polish and conviction of a retired banker. O'Rourke glanced up and down the table, and detected one more sailor — a quiet young man clad in white duck, with " Royal Naval Reserve " marked upon him for the knowing to see. These four men (each one so unlike the other three in clothes, appearance, and behaviour) all wore the light of wide waters in their eyes, the peace bred of long night-watches on their tanned brows, and the right to command on chin and jaw. O'Rourke felt his heart warm toward them, for he, too, had kept vigil beside the ghostly mizzen, and read the compass by the uncertain torch of the lightning.

The other occupants of the table were residents of the country — two English planters, the major, a commission-merchant, a native cavalry officer, and several operators of the South American Cable Company. The major remarked upon the rotten state of the country to O'Rourke, in a confidential whisper, as he shook the dice in the leather cylinder. O'Rourke replied, politely, that he wasn't an authority.

" But I am, sir," blustered the major. " Dear heaven, man, I'd like to know who has been American consul in this hole for the last seven years, only to get chucked out last May by a low plebeian politician."

The speaker's eyes were fierce, though watery, and

his face was red as the sun through smoke. He drained his glass, and glared at O'Rourke.

"Couldn't say. Never was here before," replied O'Rourke. He counted his neighbour's throw aloud, for the benefit of the table.

"Three aces, a six, and a five."

He was about to recover two of the dice from a shallow puddle on the table, and replace them in the box, when he felt a hand on his arm.

"*I* was American consul," hissed the major, "and, by hell, I'm still sober enough to count my own dice, and pick 'em up, too."

O'Rourke smiled, unruffled. "You don't mean you are sober enough, major — you mean you are not quite too drunk," he said. The others paused in their talk, and laughed. The major opened his eyes a trifle wider and dropped his under jaw. He looked the young stranger up and down.

"Well, I hope you are ashamed of yourself," he said, at last.

"I am sorry I was rude, sir," explained O'Rourke, "but I hate to be grabbed by the arm that way. I must have a nerve there that connects with my temper."

A tipsy smile spread over the ex-consul's face.

"Shake hands, my boy," he cried. They shook hands. The others craned their necks to see.

"You've come just in time to cheer me up, for I've been lonely since Hemming went into the bush," exclaimed the major.

"Hemming! Do you mean Herbert Hemming?" asked O'Rourke, eagerly.

"That's who I mean," replied the major, and pushed the dice-box toward him. O'Rourke made nothing better than a pair, and had to pay for thirteen drinks. If you crave a lime-squash of an afternoon, the above method is not always the cheapest way of acquiring it. As the dice-box went the rounds again, and the attention of the company returned to generalities, the newcomer asked more particulars of Hemming's whereabouts.

"He started into the bush more than a week ago, to find some new kind of adventure and study the interior, he said," explained the major, "but my own opinion is that he went to see old Tetson in his place up the Plado. Sly boy, Hemming! Whenever we spoke of that crazy Tetson, and his daughter, and his money, he pretended not to take any stock in them. But I'll eat my hat — and it's the only one I have — if he isn't there at this minute, flashing that precious gig-lamp of his at the young lady."

O'Rourke had read stories about this eccentric millionaire in the newspapers some years before.

" Hemming is safe, wherever he lands," he said. " He's a woman-hater."

A look of half-whimsical disgust flashed across the old man's perspiring face. He leaned close to O'Rourke.

" Bah — you make me sick," he cried, " with your silly commonplaces. Woman-hater — bah — any fool, any schoolboy can say that. Call a man an ice-riding pinapede, and you'll display the virtue of originality, at least. At first I suspected you of brains."

O'Rourke was embarrassed. How could he explain that, in using the term woman-hater, he had meant to suit his conversation to the intellect of his hearer. It was commonplace, without doubt, and meant nothing at all.

" Do you think, Mr. O'Rourke," continued the other, " that simply because I'm stranded in this hole, on my beam-ends (to use the language of our worthy table-mates), that my brain is past being offended? You are wrong, then, my boy, just as sure as my name is Farrington. Hemming would never have called a man a woman-hater. Why, here am I, sir, sitting as I have sat every day for years, getting drunk, and with never a word to a woman, white or black, for about as long as you have used a razor. But I don't hate women — not I. I'd

give my life, such as it is, any minute, for the first woman who would look at me without curling her lip — that is, the first well-bred white woman. Ask Hemming what he thinks, and he will tell you that, in spite of the men, women are still the finest creatures God ever invented. No doubt he seems indifferent now, but that's because he has loved some girl very much, and has been hurt by her."

"You are right, major, and I gladly confess I used a dashed stupid expression — so now, if you don't mind, please shut up about it," replied O'Rourke. To his surprise Farrington smiled, nodded in a knowing way, and lapsed into silence.

While one of the mariners was relating a fearsome experience of his own on a wrecked schooner, Mr. Cuddlehead entered the place and seated himself at the unoccupied table. He sipped his peg, and studied the men at the other table with shifting glances. He thought they looked easy, and a vastly satisfied expression came to his unhealthy, old-young face. Though well groomed and well clothed, Mr. Cuddlehead's deportment suggested, however vaguely, a feeling on his part of personal insecurity. He glanced apprehensively whenever a voice was raised high in argument. He started in his chair when the man who served the refreshments came unexpectedly to his table to deposit a match-holder.

To O'Rourke, who had an eye for things beyond the dice, Mr. Cuddlehead's face hinted at some strange ways of life, and undesirable traits of character. In the loose mouth he saw signs of a once colossal impudence; in the bloated cheeks, dissipation and the wrecking existence of one who feasts to-day and starves to-morrow; in the eyes cruelty and cunning; in the chin and forehead a low sort of courage.

Gradually the crowd at the long table thinned. First of all the cavalry officer arose, flicked imaginary dust off the front of his baggy trousers, and jangled out into the reddening sunlight. The planters followed, after hearty farewells. They had long rides ahead of them to occupy the cool of the evening, and perhaps would not leave their isolated bungalows again inside a fortnight. Next the operators announced their intentions of deserting the giddy scene.

"Come along, major, you and Joyce promised to feed with us to-night," said one of them, "and if your friend there, Mr. O'Rourke, will overlook the informality of so sudden an invitation," he continued, "we'll be delighted to have him, too."

"Great heavens, Darlington," exclaimed the major, "you are still as long-winded as when you first came out," and, before O'Rourke could accept

the invitation for himself, he concluded, "of course O'Rourke will honour you, my boy."

"Thank you, very much, it's awfully good of you chaps," stammered O'Rourke, disconcerted by the major's offhand manner.

Darlington smiled reassuringly. "Don't let this old cock rattle you," he said, and patted Major Farrington affectionately on the shoulder.

After dinner that night, in the palatial dining-room of the house occupied by the staff of the South American Cable Company, O'Rourke learned something of the major's past life. It was a sad and unedifying story. The major had been trained at West Point, and led his class in scholarship and drill, and had risen, with more than one distinction, to the rank of major. But all the while he had made his fight against drink, as well as the usual handicaps in the game of life. He had married a woman with wealth and position superior to his own, who had admired him for his soldierly qualities and fine appearance, and who, later, had been the first to desert him. Then followed the foreign consular appointments, the bitter and ever-increasing debaucheries, and at last the forced retirement from his country's service. Now he lived on a small allowance, sent him weekly, by his family. O'Rourke began to

understand the old man's fretful and disconcerting moods.

At a late hour the superintendent of the staff ushered O'Rourke to a big, cool room on the second floor.

"Make this your home," he said, "and we'll let you in on the same footing as ourselves. Hemming occupied this room last. There is his bed; there is his hammock; and, by Jove, there are his slippers. You can have your traps brought up in the morning."

Thus did Bertram St. Ives O'Rourke become an inmate of an imposing mansion in Pernambuco, with moderate charges to pay and good company to enliven his hours.

CHAPTER VI.

CUDDLEHEAD DECIDES ON AN ADVENTURE

TOWARD noon of a stifling day, the major and Mr. Cuddlehead met in the square by the waterfront. Cuddlehead greeted the major affably. As the major was very thirsty he returned the salutation. A glance through the door at his elbow displayed, to Mr. Cuddlehead's uncertain eyes, a number of round tables with chairs about them. He took out his watch and examined it.

"Eleven-thirty — I always take something at half-past eleven. I hope you will join me," he said.

"I seldom drink before lunch," replied Farrington, "but as this is an exceptionally dry day — "

They passed through the doorway and sat down at the nearest table.

"Now I will find out what is doing," thought Cuddlehead, and gave his order. But for a long time the major's tongue refused to be loosened. He sipped his liquor, and watched his companion with eyes of unfriendly suspicion. Cuddlehead, in the

meantime, exhibited an excellent temper, put a few casual questions, and chatted about small things of general interest.

Now Cuddlehead had heard, from the captain of the mail-boat, something about a wealthy American with a bee in his bonnet and a pretty daughter, somewhere within reach of Pernambuco. The story had grown upon him, and a great idea had taken shape in his scheming mind. Why shouldn't he, if all that people said and wrote about American girls was true? By gad, he'd make a shot at it. He'd show them how to spend their money in more interesting places than the back of nowhere. As soon as the major began to look more friendly, under the influence of the crude whiskey, he produced his cigar-case, — a fat black leather affair, with an engraved silver plate on the front of it, — and offered the old man an excellent weed of Havana. The major took it, glancing keenly, but swiftly, at the initials on the case as he did so. "P. doesn't stand for Cuddlehead," he thought, but said nothing.

"Tell me something about the man who owns a whole country, somewhere back here, in the bush," urged Cuddlehead, lightly. The old man's muddled wits awoke and jerked a warning. Here was some scum of Heaven knows where, wanting to interfere in a better man's business.

"What's that, my boy?" he asked, looking stupidly interested.

"Oh, it is of no importance. It just struck me as being a bit out of the way," replied the other.

"What?" inquired the major.

"The place Mr. Tetson hangs out," laughed Cuddlehead.

"It's all that, my boy," replied Farrington, gleefully; then he stared, open-mouthed. "At least," he added, "it may be, but what the hell are you gabbing about?"

"Sorry. Had no idea it was a secret," retorted the younger man.

The major's potations flooded to his head. His face took on a darker shade of crimson. His hands twitched on the table.

"Secrets! You d—n little sneak," he roared, staggering up and overturning his chair. The expression of insolence faded from Cuddlehead's face. He dashed out of the place without paying for the bottle of whiskey. On the pavement he paused, long enough to compose his features and straighten his necktie. Then he went to the ship-chandler and gathered a wealth of information concerning Harris William Tetson. But he heard no mention of Hemming being in the country, which was, perhaps, just as well. He was certainly a sneak, as more

than the major had called him, but he was not altogether a duffer. He could look after himself to a certain extent. He decided to keep Pernambuco until later, and go now for bigger game. He made his plans speedily, fearing another meeting with the major, and early next morning started along the coast, inside the reef, as a passenger aboard a native *barcassa*. The voyage to the mouth of the river Plado would take the better part of a day. He would wait in the little village for Mr. Tetson's steam-launch, which made weekly runs to the coast for mail and supplies.

CHAPTER VII.

HEMMING LEARNS SOMETHING ABOUT HIS ARMY

In Pernamba, up the Plado, life had taken on a brighter aspect for at least two of the inhabitants. Marion Tetson was thankful beyond the power of speech, because the fever had left Hicks. True, it had left him thin and weak as a baby, but his very helplessness made him dearer in her eyes. That one who had been so big and strong should ask her to lift his head whenever he wanted a drink, and should have his pillow turned for him without displaying a sign of rebellion, stabbed her to the innermost soul with wonder and pity. Hicks was happy because she was near him all day, her eyes telling what her lips were longing to say, if his dared to question. Then he could half remember some things which were as part of his dreaming — wonderful, magic things with all the glamour of dreams, free from the weariness of the fever. But he said nothing of these just then to Marion, though she read his thoughts like a book while he lay there

very quiet, smiling a little, his gaze following her every movement. To Hemming also he wore his heart on his sleeve. Of this fact he was blissfully ignorant. Mrs. Tetson often came to his room and gave him motherly advice about not talking too much and not thinking too hard. Hicks felt no desire to talk, but as for thinking, Lord, she might as well have told him to stop breathing. He thought more in ten minutes now than he had before in any three hours. They were comforting thoughts, though, for the most part, and Marion knew that they did him more good than harm.

Hemming kept up a show of interest in the army. He lectured the officers and drilled the men, and dined almost every night at the mess, which he had remodelled on the English plan. But most of the time he kept his eye on the President. It was a job he did not care about, — this prying into another man's business, — but somehow he could not put it by him, things were so obviously out of order. He kept his monocle polished, his ears open, and his mouth shut. He was always willing to listen to the President's dreary conversations. The life lacked excitement for one who had run the gauntlet of a hundred vital dangers. He had given up all special correspondence, but did a good deal of fiction when the mood was on him. The longing to

return to a more active existence grew stronger every day, but his friendship for the Tetsons and for Hicks kept him at his post.

Hemming's morning coffee was always served in his room at six o'clock. That left him about two and a half hours of the cool of the day in which to work. Breakfast, with its queer dishes of hot meats, and claret, tea, and coffee to drink, came on about nine. Breakfast was a family affair, and after it every one retired for a nap. Hemming usually drank his coffee before he dressed, but one morning Smith found him pacing the room, booted and spurred, and attired in stained breeches and a faded tunic. There were cigar ashes on the floor beside the bed. A volume of Stevenson's "Men and Books" lay open on the pillow.

"Fill my flask," he said, "and let the President know that I may not be back until evening."

"Very good, sir," replied the valet. "Will I order your horse, sir?"

While the man was out of the room Hemming pulled open a drawer in his desk, in search of revolver cartridges. The contents of the drawer were in a shocking jumble. In his despatch-box at large among his papers he found half a dozen cartridges, a cigarette from the army and navy stores at home, and a small bow of black ribbon. He picked up the

bow, kissed it lightly, and instead of restoring it to the box put it in his pocket.

"She liked me well enough in those days — or else she did some — ah — remarkable acting," he said.

Turning on his heel he found Smith in the doorway.

"Your horse is ready, sir," said the man. Hemming blushed, and, to hide his confusion, told Smith to go to the devil. He rode away with an unloaded revolver in his holster.

"It must be a pretty rotten country," soliloquized the valet, "when a single-eye-glassed, right-about-turn, warranted-not-to-shrink-wear-or-tear gent like that gets buggy before breakfast."

The commander-in-chief rode from the gardens by the same gate at which he had entered for the first time only a month before. He did not return the salute of a corporal in the door of the guard-house. He did not notice the little brown soldier at the gate, who stood at attention upon his approach, and presented arms as he passed — which was, perhaps, just as well, for a freshly lighted cigarette smoked on the ground at the man's feet. He turned his horse's head northward. On both sides of the street arose the straight brown boles of the royal palms, and high above the morning wind

sang in the stiff foliage. At the end of the street he turned into the path by which he had first entered the town. The country folk urged their horses into the bush that he might pass, and he rode by unheeding. In their simple minds they wondered at this, for the fame of his alert perception and flashing eye-glass had gone far and near. Of his own accord the white stallion came to a standstill before a hut. Hemming looked up, his reverie broken, and his thoughts returned to Pernamba.

A woman came to the narrow doorway and greeted him with reverence. He recognized in her the woman who had first welcomed him to the country. He dismounted and held out his hand.

"How is the little fellow?" he asked. At that the tears sprang into her eyes, and Hemming saw that her face was drawn with sorrow. He followed her into the dim interior of the hut. The boy lay in a corner, upon an untidy bed, and above him stood the English doctor. The two men shook hands.

"I can clear him of the fever," said the doctor, "but what for? It's easier to die of fever than of starvation."

"Starvation," exclaimed Hemming, "why starvation?"

"The señor does not know," said the woman. "It

is not in his kind heart to ruin the poor, and bring sorrow to the humble."

"But," said the doctor, looking at Hemming, "to Englishmen of our class, a nigger is a nigger, say what you please, and the ends-of-the-earth is a place to make money and London is the place to spend it."

The soldier's face whitened beneath the tan.

"Don't judge me by your own standards, Scott, simply because you were born a gentleman," he said.

"Oh," laughed the doctor, "to me money would be of no use, even in London. I find the ends-of-the-earth a place to hide my head."

"But what of starvation and ruin?" asked the other.

"I thought," replied the doctor, "that you were in command of the army. Ask those mud-faced soldiers of yours why this woman has nothing to feed to her child."

"I *will* ask them," said the commander-in-chief, and he ripped out an oath that did Scott's heart good to hear. He turned to the woman.

"I am sorry for this," he said, "and will see that all that was taken from you is safely returned. The President and I knew nothing about it." He drew a wad of notes from his pocket and handed it to her. Then he looked at the doctor.

"If I did not like you, Scott, and respect you," he continued, "I'd punch your head for thinking this of me. But you had both the grace and courage to tell me what you thought."

"I don't think it now," said Scott, "and I don't want my head punched, either, for my flesh heals very slowly. But if I ever feel in need of a thrashing, old man, I'll call on you. No doubt it would be painful, but there'd be no element of disgrace connected with it."

Hemming blushed, for compliments always put him out of the game. The woman suddenly stepped closer, and, snatching his hand to her face, kissed it twice before he could pull it away. He retreated to the door, and the doctor laughed. Safe in the saddle, he called to the doctor.

"My dear chap," he said, "you have inspired me to a confession. I, too, have soured on London."

"Let me advise you to try your luck again. A girl is sometimes put in a false light by circumstances — the greed of parents, for instance," replied Scott.

Hemming stared, unable to conceal his amazement.

"I have not always lived in Pernamba," laughed Scott. "I have dined more than once at your mess.

Fact is, I was at one time surgeon in the Sixty-Second."

"You are a dry one, certainly," said Hemming.

"It is unkind of you to remind me of it when the nearest bottle of soda is at least three miles away, and very likely warm at that," retorted the doctor. Hemming leaned forward in his saddle and grasped his hand.

"I will not take your advice," he said, "but it was kind of you to give it. Forgive me for mentioning it, Scott, but you are a dashed good sort."

"Man," cried the other, "didn't I tell you that I am hiding my head?" He slapped the white stallion smartly on the rump, and Hemming went up the trail at a canter.

CHAPTER VIII.

CAPTAIN SANTOSA VISITS HIS SUPERIOR OFFICER

HEMMING got back to the village in time to change and dine with the family. The President's mind was otherwhere than at the table. He would look about the room, staring at the shadows beyond the candle-light, as if seeking something. He pushed the claret past him, and ordered rye whiskey. His kind face showed lines unknown to it a month before. Mrs. Tetson watched him anxiously. Marion and the commander-in-chief talked together like well-tried comrades, laughing sometimes, but for the most part serious. Marion was paler than of old, but none the less beautiful for that. Her eyes were brighter, with a light that seemed to burn far back in them, steady and tender. Her lips were ever on the verge of smiling. Hemming told her all of his interview with the peasant woman, and part of his interview with Scott.

"There will be trouble soon," he said.

She begged him not to stir it up until Valentine was well enough to have a finger in it.

"You may not think him very clever," she said, "but even you will admit that he shoots straight, and has courage."

"I will admit anything in his favour," replied Hemming, "but as for his shooting, why, thank Heaven, I have never tested it."

"Wasn't he very rude to you one night?" she asked.

He laughed quietly. "The circumstances warranted it, but he was rude to the wrong person, don't you think?"

"No, indeed," she cried, "for no matter how minus a quantity your guilt, or how full of fault I had been, it would never have done for him to threaten me with a —" She paused.

"Service revolver?" said Hemming, "and one of my own at that."

"Fever is a terrible thing," she said, gazing at the red heart of the claret.

"My dear sister," said the Englishman, "a man would gladly suffer more to win less."

They smiled frankly into one another's eyes.

"Then you do not think too badly of me?" she asked.

"I think everything that is jolly — of both of you," he replied.

"I like your friendship," she said, "for, though you seem such a good companion, I do not believe you give it lightly."

After the coffee and an aimless talk with Tetson, Hemming looked in at Hicks and found him drinking chicken broth as if he liked it. The invalid was strong enough to manage the spoon himself, but Marion held the bowl. Hemming went to his own room, turned on the light above his desk, and began to write. He worked steadily until ten o'clock. Then he walked up and down the room for awhile, rolling and smoking cigarettes. The old ambition had him in its clutches. Pernamba, with its heat, its dulness, its love and hate, had faded away. Now he played a bigger game — a game for the world rather than for half a battalion of little brown soldiers. A knock sounded on his door, and, before he could answer it, Captain Santosa, glorious in his white and gold, stepped into the room. The sight of the Brazilian brought his dreams to the dust. "Damn," he said, under his breath.

Then he waved his subordinate to a seat.

The captain's manner was as courteous as ever, his smile as urbane, his eyes as unfathomable. But his dusky cheek showed an unusual pallor, and as he

sat down he groaned. Hemming eyed him sharply; men like Santosa do not groan unless they are wounded — maybe in their pride, by a friend's word, maybe in their vitals by an enemy's knife. There was no sign of blood on the spotless uniform.

"A drink?" queried Hemming, turning toward the bell.

"Not now," said the captain, "but afterward, if you then offer it to me." He swallowed hard, looked down at his polished boots, aloft at the ceiling, and presently at his superior officer's staring eye-glass. From this he seemed to gather courage.

"I have disturbed you at your rest, at your private work," he said, with a motion of the hand toward the untidy desk, "but my need is great. I must choose between disloyalty to my brother officers, and disloyalty to you and the President. I have chosen, sir, and I now resign my commission. I will no longer ride and drink and eat with robbers and liars. It is not work for a gentleman." He paused and smiled pathetically. "I will go away. There is nothing else for my father's son to do."

"I heard something of this — no longer ago than to-day," said Hemming.

Santosa lit a cigar and puffed for awhile in silence.

"I winked at it too long," he said, at last, "for I was dreaming of other things. So that I kept my

own hands clean I did not care. Then you came, and I watched you. I saw that duty was the great thing, after all — even for a soldier. And I saw that even a gentleman might earn his pay decently."

Hemming smiled, and polished his eye-glass on the lining of his dinner-jacket.

"Thank you, old chap. You have a queer way of putting it, but I catch the idea," he said.

The captain bowed. "I will go away, but not very far, for I would like to be near, to help you in any trouble. Our dear friend Valentine, whom I love as a brother, is not yet strong. The President, whom I honour, is not a fighter, I think. The ladies should go to the coast."

"You are right," said Hemming, "but do not leave us for a day or two. I will consider your resignation. Now for a drink."

He rang the bell, and then pulled a chair close to Santosa. When Smith had gone from the room, leaving the decanter and soda-water behind him, the two soldiers touched glasses and drank. They were silent. The Brazilian felt better now, and the Englishman was thinking too hard to talk. A gust of wind banged the wooden shutters at the windows. It was followed by a flash of lightning. Then came the rain, pounding and splashing on the roof, and hammering the palms in the garden.

"That's sudden," said Hemming.

"Things happen suddenly in this country," replied Santosa.

Hemming leaned back and crossed his legs.

"Have you seen Hicks since the fever bowled him?" he asked.

"No," replied the captain, "no, I have not seen him, but he is my friend and I wish him well. Is it not through our friends, Hemming, that we come by our griefs? It has seemed so to me."

Hemming glanced at him quickly, but said nothing. Santosa was a gentleman, and might safely be allowed to make confessions.

"When I first came here," continued the captain, "I was poor, and the Brazilian army owed me a whole year's back pay. I had spent much on clothes and on horses, trying hard to live like my father's son. Mr. Tetson offered me better pay, and a gayer uniform. I was willing to play at soldiering, for I saw that some gain might be made from it, outside the pay. My brother officers saw this also, and we talked of it often. Then Miss Tetson came to Pernamba. I rode out with her to show her the country. I told her of my father, and of how, when they carried him in from the field, they found that the Order of Bolivar had been driven edgewise through his tunic and into his breast by the blow

of a bullet. And when I saw the look on her face, my pride grew, but changed in some way, and it seemed to me that the son of that man should leave thieving and the crushing of the poor to men of less distinction.

"Sometimes my heart was bitter within me, and my fingers itched for the feel of Valentine's throat. But I hope I was always polite, Hemming." He got lightly to his feet, and held out his hand.

"Young ladies talk so in convent-schools," he said.

"Not at all," replied Hemming, gravely, "and I can assure you that your attitude toward all concerned has left nothing to be desired. I will look you up at your quarters after breakfast."

Captain Santosa went through the gardens, humming a Spanish love-song. He turned near a fountain and looked up at a lighted window. His white uniform gleamed in the scented dusk. He kissed his finger-tips to the window. "The end of that dream," he said, lightly, and his eyes were as unfathomable as ever. The water dripped heavily on to the gold of his uniform.

Hemming went in search of the President, and found him in the billiard-room, idly knocking the balls about with a rasping cue.

"Have a game, like a good chap," urged the great man.

The commander-in-chief shook his head.

"Not now, sir. I came to tell you something about the army," he replied. He was shocked at Tetson's sudden pallor. The yellow cigar was dropped from nerveless fingers and smeared a white trail of ash across the green cloth.

"What do they want?" asked Tetson, in a husky voice.

"Oh, they take whatever they want," replied Hemming; "the taxes that are due you, and something besides from the unprotected." Then he retailed the case of the poor woman. When he had finished Tetson did not speak immediately. His benevolent face wore an expression that cut Hemming to the heart.

"I must think it over," he said, wearily, "I must think it over."

CHAPTER IX.

MR. CUDDLEHEAD ARRIVES

MR. CUDDLEHEAD'S trip, though free from serious accident, had been extremely trying. The *barcassa* had cramped his legs, and the smell of the native cooking, in so confined a space, had unsettled his stomach. He had been compelled to wait three days in the uninteresting village at the mouth of the Plado, unable to hurry the leisurely crew of the launch. But at last the undesirable journey came to an end, and with a sigh of relief he issued from beneath the smoke-begrimed awning, and stretched his legs on the little wharf at Pernamba. He looked at the deserted warehouses along the river-front, and a foreboding of disaster chilled him. The afternoon lay close and bright in the unhealthy valley, and the very peacefulness of the scene awoke a phantom of fear in his heart. What if the President were a man of the world after all, with a knowledge of men and the signs on their faces? Why, then, good-bye to all hope of the family circle.

A black boy accosted Cuddlehead, awaking him from his depressing surmises. The nigger gabbled in the language of the country. Then he pointed at the traveller's bag.

"Take it, by all means," said Cuddlehead.

There is one hostelry in Pernamba, on a side street behind the military stables. It is small and not very clean. To this place the boy led Cuddlehead, and at the door demanded five hundred reis — the equivalent of sixpence. Cuddlehead doubled the sum, for after all he had done very well of late, and a favourable impression is a good thing to make in a new stamping-ground, even on a nigger. The proprietor of the inn bowed him to the only habitable guest-chamber. Here he bathed, as well as he could with two small jugs of water and his shaving-soap, and then changed into a suit of clean white linen. With a cigarette between his lips and a light rattan in his hand, Cuddlehead was himself again. He swaggered into the narrow street and started in search of the President's villa. He passed a group of soldiers puffing their cigarettes in a doorway, who stared after him with interest and some misgivings. "Was the place to be invaded by Englishmen?" they wondered. He saw a brown girl of attractive appearance, rolling cigars beside an open window. He entered the humble habitation, and, after ex-

amining the samples of leaf, in sign language ordered a hundred cigars. Then he embraced the girl, and was promptly slapped across the face and pushed out of the shop.

"What airs these d—n niggers put on," he muttered, "but maybe I was a bit indiscreet."

Here, already, was the hand of Hemming against him, though he did not know it; for Hemming, also, had bought cigars from the girl, and had treated her as he treated all women, thereby establishing her self-respect above the attentions of men with eyes like Cuddlehead's.

Cuddlehead found the gates open to the President's grounds without much trouble, and was halted by the sentry. He produced his card-case. The sentry whistled. The corporal issued from the guard-house, with his tunic open and his belt dangling.

Just then Captain Santosa entered from the street, with, in the metaphorical phrase of a certain whist-playing poet, "a smile on his face, and a club in his hand." He swore at the corporal, who retreated to the guard-house, fumbling at his buttons. He bowed to Cuddlehead, and glanced at the card.

"You would like to see the President?" he said. "Then I will escort you to the door." He caught up his sword and hooked it short to his belt, wheeled

like a drill-sergeant, and fitted his stride to Cuddlehead's.

Mr. Tetson received the visitor in his airy office. He seemed disturbed in mind, wondering, perhaps, if this were a dun from some wholesale establishment on the coast. He had been working on his books all the morning, and had caught a glimpse of ruin, like a great shadow, across the tidy pages. But he managed to welcome Cuddlehead heartily enough.

"You must stay to dinner, sir, — pot-luck, — very informal, you know," he said, hospitably. He leaned against the desk and passed his hand across his forehead. He could not keep his mind from working back to the sheets of ruled paper.

"Ten thousand," he pondered, "ten thousand for April alone, and nothing to put against it. The army wanting its pay, and robbing me of all I have. Gregory's coal bill as long as my leg. Sugar gone to the devil!" He sighed, mopped his face, and looked at Cuddlehead, who all the while had been observing him with furtive, inquiring eyes. He offered a yellow cigar, and lit one himself.

"Excuse me a moment," he said. "I have something to see to. Here are some English papers. I'll be back immediately, Mr. Cuddlehead, and then maybe we can have a game of billiards."

He went hurriedly from the room.

"You are a foolish old party," remarked Cuddlehead to the closed door, "and, no doubt, you'll be all the easier for that. Hope your daughter is a better looker, that's all."

He tossed the offensive cigar into the garden, and seated himself in the chair by the desk. His courage was growing.

At the hall door Mr. Tetson met Hemming entering. The commander was booted and spurred.

"Are you busy?" inquired the President. "There's a visitor in here."

The Englishman glared.

"Yes, sir, I am busy," he replied. "I've caught my command in seven of their thieving tricks, and have ridden thirty miles to do it. I've told the whole regiment what I think of them, and now I must dine at the mess, to see that they don't concoct any schemes to murder me."

"Haven't you time for a game of billiards with Mr. Cuddlehead?" asked Mr. Tetson.

"No, sir, I have not," replied Hemming, crisply, and tramped away to change his clothes. "The old ass," he muttered, under his breath.

Dinner that night was a dull affair. Hemming and Hicks were both absent from the table. Cuddlehead had excellent manners, and all the outward signs of social grace, but a warning was marked on

his face. The President tried to be entertaining, but the terror of an impending disturbance, and even of ruin, hung over him. Mrs. Tetson, guessing somewhat of her husband's troubles, sat pale and fearful. Marion was polite, with a politeness that, after two or three essays of gallantry on Cuddlehead's part, left him inwardly squirming. After dinner Miss Tetson described the visitor to Hicks, mentioning the horrible mouth, the shifting eyes, and the odious attentions.

"He must be pretty bad, for you to talk about him," said Valentine, in wonder.

"Oh, if I had never seen men like you and Mr. Hemming," she answered, "he would not seem so utterly ridiculous."

Hicks was in a chair by the window, and Marion was perched on the arm of it. His eyes were desperate. Hers were bright and daring. Her mouth was tremulous.

"I can understand your admiration for Hemming," he said. "He is the best chap on earth, barring only you."

Marion smiled.

"I wonder," he continued, presently, "I wonder if — that was all a dream?"

"What?" she asked.

"I wish I could see you," he said. "I believe you are laughing at me up there."

"I am laughing," she replied, "but I don't know why exactly."

"At my stupidity, perhaps."

"You are certainly very stupid."

"No, I'm a coward."

"What are you afraid of?"

He leaned back as far as he could, trying to see her face.

"I am afraid you pity me — and don't love me," he said.

He breathed hard after that, as if he had run a mile.

"I am not modest enough to pity you," she said, softly, "though no doubt you are deserving of pity."

"Marion," he whispered, "for God's sake, don't. I'm too blind with anxiety to read riddles. Tell me straight — do you love me? Have I even the ghost of a chance?"

"Do you believe in ghosts?" asked she, with trembling laughter, and, bending forward, with a hand on either of his thin shoulders, she pressed her cheek to his.

While love had his innings in the sick-room, below curiosity led the feet of Mr. Cuddlehead toward the officers' quarters on the outskirts of the town. The

night was fine, and not oppressively close. A breeze from the hills made liquid stir in the higher foliage. Cuddlehead felt in his blood a hint of something unusual, as he took his way through the President's wide gardens, and out to the road. No sentinel paced, sabre at shoulder, before the little guard-house. The troopers stood in groups along the street, smoking and talking. The smoke of their pungent cigarettes drifted on the air, and the murmur of their voices rang with a low note of menace. Unmolested, Cuddlehead reached the long white building where the officers of this inconsiderable army lodged and messed. Through the open windows glowed a subdued light from the shaded lamps above the table. The compassing verandas were but partially illuminated by the glow from within, and silent men stood here and there in the shadows, motionless and expectant. At Cuddlehead's approach, the nearer ones hesitated for a moment, and then drew away.

"There is something rotten," quoted Cuddlehead, under his breath, and looked cautiously in. For a moment the array of faultless, gaudy mess-jackets startled him. In the sight of an apparently civilized military mess there was, to him, a suggestion of danger. Recovering his composure, he looked again. The faces up and down the table were

dark, and, for the most part, sullen. At the head of the board, with his face toward the onlooker's place of vantage, sat Hemming. His shoulders were squared. His eye-glass gleamed in the lamplight. Cuddlehead stared at the commander-in-chief with a fearful, spellbound gaze. His hands clutched at the low window-sill. His breath seemed to hang in his windpipe. At last he straightened himself, moistened his craven lips with his tongue, and went stealthily away. Safe in his own room in the quiet inn, he took a shrewd nip of raw brandy.

"What the devil," he asked himself, "brought that righteous, immaculate fool to this God-forsaken place?"

Two things were uppermost in his memory — a caning once given to a cad, and a shilling once tossed to a beggar.

CHAPTER X.

THE FIRST SHOT

Mr. Cuddlehead did not go far afield during the day following his glimpse of the officers' dinner-table. Instead, he kept to his room until evening, or at most took a furtive turn or two on the cobbles before the inn door. After his lonely and not very palatable dinner was over, he set out cautiously for the President's villa. He wanted to have a talk with Miss Tetson alone. She, no doubt, could explain matters to him, so that he might be able to decide on a course of action. He walked slowly, keeping always a vigilant look-out for the trim, dauntless figure of Herbert Hemming. At the great gateway the brown boy on sentry-go saluted, and let him pass without question. In return he treated the fellow to his blandest smile and a *milreis* note. He did not keep long to the drive, but turned off into a narrow path as soon as he felt that the soldier had ceased watching him. He took his time, traversing winding paths between low tropical shrubs and yel-

low-stemmed bamboo, but always drawing nearer to the quiet mansion. Presently his ear caught a welcome sound, — the soft, frivolous strumming of a banjo. He was aware that Hemming was not musical; in fact, he remembered that his rendering of "Father O'Flynn" had once been mistaken for the national anthem.

Cuddlehead found Miss Tetson on a stone seat, near her favourite fountain. At sight of him, she stopped her idle playing, and answered his salutation with the coldest of bows. Her lover's kisses still burned on her lips, and words of his impulsive wooing still rang sweetly in her ears. Even the little brown crane, that stood there watching the sparkling water with eyes like yellow jewels, reminded her of a certain evening when she had been unkind to Valentine Hicks. The hour was not for Cuddlehead.

Undisturbed by the coolness of his reception, Mr. Cuddlehead seated himself at the far end of the bench, and began to talk. He described his journey from Pernambuco to Pernamba, and with so fine a wit that Marion smiled. He told little anecdotes of his past, very clever, and very vague as to dates and scenes. The girl almost forgot the sinister aspect of his face in the charm of his conversation, and when he mentioned Hemming, in terms of

warmest respect, she confided to him something of his trouble with the army.

"Perhaps I can be of some use; one Englishman should be good for ten of those niggers," he said. He lifted the banjo from the seat, and made it dance and sing through the newest Southern melody. His touch was both dainty and brilliant. He replaced the instrument on the seat between them. He saw that the girl was more favourably impressed with him than she had been. For a little while they kept silence, and her thoughts returned to Valentine Hicks. Suddenly they heard Hemming's voice, pitched low and sharp, in anger. He was hidden from them by shrubs of tangled growth.

"I have given my orders," he said. "Do you understand?"

The thick voice of the colonel made reply in spluttering oaths.

"No more of that," said Hemming, fiercely.

Marion heard the crunch of his heels on the path as he wheeled. Cuddlehead held his breath, the better to hear, and a quotation about a house divided against itself came imperfectly to his mind.

The heavy footsteps of the native officer were heard retreating. Presently Hemming rounded the hedge of roses, and stood by the fountain. By the faint starlight the watchers saw that he was smiling.

He lit a cigarette with deliberate care, and dropped the match into the shallow basin of the fountain. He lit another match and looked at his watch. He had the air of one keeping a tryst. Santosa came out of the shadows beyond, booted and spurred. The two men shook hands, and whispered together. Their backs were turned square upon the occupants of the bench. Then Hemming produced a long packet of papers and gave them to Santosa.

"Mr. Tetson has signed them all," he said, "and the major will see to the business part of it. Impress the importance of the matter upon him, and then hurry back, for I'm afraid these idiots intend making this unpleasant for us. And now, old man, good luck and God bless you. It is a fine night for a ride."

"A beautiful night," replied Santosa, "and on such a night I must either make love to my friends or trouble for my enemies."

He turned on his heel and clanked away.

All this time Marion had sat as one spellbound. Now she looked toward the other end of the stone seat. Cuddlehead had gone. She called to Hemming. He started at the sound of her voice. "You here?" he said.

"Yes, and so was Mr. Cuddlehead a moment ago. But he sneaked off, the little cad."

"Did he see the papers?" he asked.

"Yes, I'm sure he did," she replied.

"You had better run into the house," he said. "I'll look for the spy."

Marion hastened indoors, and told Hicks all she knew about the trouble. The young man looked deeply concerned.

"I wish Hemming had come to us a year ago," he exclaimed.

"Could he have helped it?" she asked.

"I believe he would have opened our eyes, dear, before things got into such an awful mess," replied her lover.

"But surely we are not in any danger," she urged. "Surely Mr. Hemming and father can quiet them."

"Our lives are safe enough, but the little fools may break some windows. You see, dear, the President and I have not watched them as we should. We have let them rob us right and left, and now, when Hemming tries to spoil their game, and force them to divvy up, they evidently want to bully us. It's in their blood, you know, — this revolution business." Having thus unbosomed himself, Hicks leaned weakly back in his chair.

"Dearest," he said, presently, "will you bring

me my Winchester — it's in the boot closet — and that bag of cartridges on my writing-table."

The girl brought them, and Hicks oiled the breech of the rifle.

A few minutes later the President and Mrs. Tetson entered the secretary's sitting-room. They found that gentleman sorting out heaps of cartridges, while their daughter sat near him busily scrubbing sections of a Colt's revolver with a toothbrush. The President's face displayed shame and consternation.

"God help us! we are ruined," he said, looking from one to another with bloodshot eyes.

He produced a yellow cigar from a shabby case, and seated himself close to the window. Suddenly he stood up and looked out.

"Who's that?" he asked.

"Hemming," came the faint reply.

A rifle cracked, and the bullet splintered the slats of the shutter. The President retired into the room and turned off the lights.

"Hemming was right. They mean to force me," he exclaimed.

Hicks tottered to the window, rifle in hand. The sounds of a violent scuffle arose from the flowerbeds. Hicks could just make out a rolling, twisting mass below.

"Hold your fire," gasped a voice which he recognized as Hemming's. Presently the mass ceased its uneasy movements, and divided itself into two equal parts, one of which continued to lie among the crushed flowers, while the other staggered along the wall of the house and entered the dining-room by a window. The President, carrying a revolver awkwardly, hurried down-stairs. Presently he returned, he and Smith leading Hemming between them. Hemming was limp, and his pale face was streaked with dust and sweat. Blood dripped from his left sleeve. His monocle was gone.

"Mrs. Tetson, if you'll tie up my arm, — I'll show you how, — I'll be fit as a fiddle," he said, and sank into a chair.

"Gun?" queried Hicks, who knelt by the window, with his rifle on the sill.

"Knife," replied Hemming.

Marion cut away the sleeve of his jacket. "Surely Mr. Cuddlehead did not carry a knife," she said.

"I don't think so; I jumped on the wrong man. Heard some one crawling through the bushes, and thought I had him. One of my own troopers — he stuck me in the muscles, — bleeds a bit, that's all," he replied.

"There's not a sound in the garden now," said Hicks.

"Who fired the shot?" asked Tetson.

"A corporal," said Hemming. "He was behind me when you spoke. I didn't know — any one — was near. He'll never — fire another — shot." Then the commander-in-chief fainted on Valentine's bed, and Smith brought him around with cold water and brandy. Then Smith stole away from the villa toward the barracks. It was close upon dawn when he returned.

"They think they'll kidnap the President and the ladies, and take them away up-country and hold them for a ransom; it is the stranger's idea," he informed them.

The President turned a shade paler, and glanced apprehensively at his wife and daughter. Hicks swore. Hemming sat up and slid his feet to the floor.

"They are fools, — and Cuddlehead must be mad," he exclaimed. Tetson went over to his wife.

"Can you forgive me, dear?" he asked, huskily. For answer she kissed him.

The villa was left undisturbed all the following day. Again darkness came. The gardens were deserted. Smith had crawled around the house four times without hearing a sound or attracting a shot. The troopers were crowded together on and about the verandas of the officers' quarters,

listening to the heated discussions of their superiors. Cuddlehead was with the officers, he and the colonel pouring their whiskey from the same decanter. A dark and silent procession moved from the President's villa down to the river, where the little steamer lay with her boilers hot. Mr. Tetson carried a small bag filled with sovereigns and a basket of food. Marion and Mrs. Tetson and two maids followed with wraps, baskets, and firearms. Smith scouted ahead. Hemming and Hicks walked feebly behind, armed and alert. The things were passed smartly aboard. The mooring-line was cleared. Hicks steadied himself by Marion's arm.

"We will soon follow you," he said. "Then you will think better of me than if I went now."

They were very close together, and the others were all busy crawling under the dirty awnings, or saying good-bye.

"I am poor as Job's turkey," he said.

"And my father is ruined," she replied.

"When will you marry me?" he asked.

"As soon as you come for me, — in Pernambuco, or New York, or — anywhere," she answered. Then she kissed him, and at the touch of her tear-wet face his heart leaped as if it would leave its place in his side to follow her.

The little steamer swung into the current, and

drifted awhile without sound. Presently a red crown of sparks sprang from the stack, and like a thing alive it darted away down the sullen stream. Hemming, Hicks, and Smith turned silently and stole back to the deserted house. During their short absence, all the native servants had run away.

Smith, who seemed devoid of fear, buried the dead trooper in the flower-bed upon which he had fallen. Doctor Scott joined the garrison toward morning, and was both relieved and surprised to find that the Tetsons had decamped safely.

"They are not dangerous now, except to property," he said. "They may do a little accidental shooting, of course, for the colonel is very drunk, and down on you, Hemming, for spoiling his profitable game. That new chap seems to be quite off his head. Never heard such fool talk in all my life as he is spouting."

"Did Santosa get away?" asked Hemming.

"Two men went after him, and only one came back, and he is in the hospital," replied the doctor.

"Who looked after him?" inquired Hemming.

"I stitched him up before I came away," replied Scott, casually.

CHAPTER XI.

THE COLONEL'S ULTIMATUM

THE little garrison breakfasted before sunrise. They had been busily occupied all night, securing doors and windows against any sudden attack. Smith made the secretary a huge bowl of beef tea, much to that warlike invalid's disgust.

"See here, Smith," he said, "if I can fight, I can eat."

"Miss Tetson's orders, sir," replied the man, gravely.

The doctor laughed boisterously, and Hicks blushed. While Hemming and Scott devoured boiled eggs, muffins and coffee, with Smith waiting on them with a revolver in his pocket, Hicks retired to another room, out of sight of temptation. The poor fellow felt that seven eggs and a plate of muffins would be as nothing in his huge emptiness. He opened one of the upper front windows, and knelt by the sill, rifle in hand. His thoughts were gloomy. The beef tea had only sharpened his ap-

petite and dampened his spirits. Outside, the dawn was quickly strengthening, filling the beautiful gardens with magic, inviting light. He thought of the little fountain in front of the bench, and of the lonely crane. Suddenly he heard the brisk padding of hoofs on the drive, and the colonel, followed by a trooper, rode up to the great steps.

With pardonable caution, Hicks protruded his head from the window, and addressed the Brazilian politely.

The stout horseman saluted, and spoke thus, in what he fondly considered to be English: "Señor, a good morning to you, my friend. I here have a letter, humbly which I wish a delivery in the hands of General Hemming."

He smiled up at the man in the window, evidently vastly pleased with his speech. It was not often that he attempted the language of these aliens.

"If you will kindly request the gentleman with you to poke the letter under the door, I shall be delighted to deliver it to the general," replied Hicks, with a wan grin.

The colonel blinked sleepily, for he had been up late, assisting at the writing of the letter, and emptying bottles. "Have no tremble, señor," he said, "for see, — I am as a sheep, mild."

"I know nothing of sheep, colonel," replied

Hicks, " and all is not wool that looks greasy." The soldiers below looked puzzled, and Hicks felt sorry that they were his only audience. Presently the colonel spoke to his man in Portuguese, and passed him a long, white envelope. The little trooper advanced upon the doorway.

" Thank you, sir," cried Hicks, and bowed, as he turned from the window. But the colonel called him back.

" A moment, señor," he said; " I will inquire of the conditions of the ladies, with most respectable regards."

" Thank you, they are very well," said Hicks, and hurried away.

When Hicks gave the letter to Hemming, that self-possessed gentleman and the doctor were smoking, with their chairs pushed back, and Smith was eating muffins with surprising rapidity.

" A letter to you? " queried Scott. " Then they must know of Tetson's escape."

" Possibly," said Hemming, and opened the paper. At first he smiled, as he read. Then, of a sudden, he wrinkled his brows, stared, and looked up.

" What is that stranger's name? " he asked, sharply.

" Cuddlehead, sir," replied Smith, promptly.

"I doubt it," retorted the other, "for I have reason enough to remember this handwriting."

To explain the remark, he opened the sheet on the table, and pointed to where a line had been crossed through and rewritten in a chirography very different to that of the body of the manuscript.

"He seemed harmless enough, whoever he is, from what I heard of him," remarked Hicks.

"He's a sneaking cad," said Hemming, hotly, "and has more devil in him than you could find in the whole of that rotten battalion put together. His real name is Penthouse, — and, by gad, no wonder he kept out of my sight!"

"May we read the letter?" asked the doctor, calmly.

"Read away," said the commander-in-chief, and got out of his chair to pace the room.

The style of the document disclosed its mongrel extraction. It ran as follows:

"To the Distinguished Señor Herbert Hemming, late Commander-in-Chief of the Army of Pernamba.

"Dear Sir: — We, the undersigned officers of the Army of Pernamba (seeing in you the real head of the presidential household), do hereby request you to consider the following petitions.

First — We desire the sum of ten thousand dollars, due us and our men, in back pay, as per signed agreement with Mr. Tetson. Second — We desire an apology from your distinguished and august self, due us for insulting words spoken to every officer and man of this army. Should the above petitions not be granted within twenty-four hours, we shall proceed, without further parley, to force the money from Mr. Tetson and the apology from you."

At the foot of this ridiculous but disconcerting epistle, stood the names of all the native officers, except, of course, Captain Santosa.

The morning passed without disturbance. The brown soldiers moved about the fast-shut house, smoking endlessly, and talking to one another. The afternoon proved as unexciting as the morning, and Smith began to long for a fight. But Hemming would not let him even take pot-shots at the men in the grounds. By the doctor's orders, the secretary's diet was advanced to soft-boiled eggs. By good luck a store of these were in the house, all more or less fresh.

The colonel took up his position before the villa bright and early on the morning of the 20th of May. It was quite evident to Hemming, who

watched him from an upper window, that he had been drinking heavily. Hemming was the first to speak.

"What do you want?" he asked.

"I am sure you know what I want, señor," he replied, in his own language.

"Mr. Tetson and I have decided not to consider your so-called petitions," said Hemming, quietly. "We would prove ourselves cowards should we do so. Mr. Tetson owes you nothing, — in fact, the debt is very much the other way; and I shall never ask your pardon for having spoken the truth."

The colonel was furious.

"Consider the safety of the ladies," he shouted.

Scott, who stood behind Hemming, chuckled at that. "What wily, open-eyed chaps they are," he said. "I wonder if they have missed the steamer yet?"

Hemming leaned from the window. "We can look after the ladies, thank you," he sneered, "and, by the way, tell your precious English friend, who helped you write that charming letter, that if I get my hands on him, he'll suffer more than he did the other time. Hurry along now."

Hemming had recovered his monocle, and before its baleful glare the colonel was silent and confused. Just then Cuddlehead thumped into view, clinging

to the neck of Hemming's own white stallion. He was in a far worse state than the colonel even, and swayed in the saddle.

"Good morning, Captain Hemming," he cried, and waved his hand.

The men in the room were startled by the expression that crossed their friend's face. The mouth hardened. The eyes narrowed. A deep flush burned in his thin cheeks. He paid no heed to the stranger's salutation.

"Pepper," he said, softly.

The stallion looked up.

"What is that pitiful object on your neck? That nasty cad?"

Pepper hung his clever little head.

His master leaned far out of the window, and his eyes met those of the little stallion.

"Pepper," he said, "jump."

Pepper jumped. Cuddlehead slid over his tail, and for a full minute remained seated in the dust. The Brazilian colonel reeled in his saddle with choking laughter.

"Good old horse, good Pepper," called Hemming, gently.

The stallion cantered away, riderless.

The object of the colonel's uncomfortable mirth got painfully to his feet. His face was purple with

the fury that raged within him. He cast discretion to the winds, and, drawing a revolver, emptied it at the smoking-room window. He looked under the cloud of dirty smoke, and saw Hemming's face bent toward him, set and horrible.

"Go away," said a voice that rang like metal, "or I will kill you where you stand. You have crossed my trail once too often, Penthouse, and, by God! this will be the last time. But now you may go away, you poor fool."

Scott twitched once or twice, where he lay on the smoking-room floor, with his head on Smith's knee.

But he was dead, sure enough, with a hole in his neck and another in his heart.

News of the doctor's death soon reached the army, and the colonel's eyes were partially opened to his foolishness. He returned to his quarters, and tried to drown his misgivings in drink. Soon he was as reckless and crazy as ever. It was not a game for a sober man to play with any chance of success. Penthouse, for it was really he, cursed his luck when he heard of his deed, but not so much in disgust at having killed a harmless stranger as in having missed Hemming. Then he steadied his nerves with a glass of brandy, and encouraged the army to fresh efforts.

In the afternoon, Hemming opened the front door, and stared at the men on the veranda. His left arm was in a sling. The troopers straightened up at sight of him, and one even went so far as to toss away his cigarette. The slim lieutenant, with the weakness for golf, bowed low.

"While you are waiting for that money," said Hemming, "will you be kind enough to ask some of your men to dig a grave over there?" He pointed with his hand. The lieutenant gave the order. Then he turned to Hemming.

"We regret the doctor's death," he said, "but, — ah — well — the fortunes of war."

"You give this lawlessness rather a dignified name," replied the Englishman.

A blush was all the Brazilian's answer.

"Do you want to kill us all, or is it only the money you are after?" asked Hemming.

The lieutenant looked both ashamed and sulky. He was handsome in a weak sort of way, with a baby face and a thread of black moustache. "We want not to kill," he began, in stilted English, then in his own tongue he continued, "We swore long ago to stick together and hold to our plans, — all except Captain Santosa. We are poor, and one way of making money seemed as good as another. We have our pride and our honour, — we officers. You

insulted our colonel. You have called us robbers. Now we will humble your arrogance, — and get our pay."

Hemming translated slowly, often having to hark back to a word and feel around for its meaning. The troopers, who had caught something of the conversation, awaited the commander-in-chief's reply in expectant attitudes.

"You have your pride," he said at last; "then, for God's sake, take it away! It reminds me of a cur with a rotten bone. And that murderer you have with you, surely you are proud of him. Humble my arrogance if you can. It will stand a lot of that sort of thing."

He looked out to where three men were breaking the sod for Scott's grave.

"How many of you has Doctor Scott nursed back to worthless lives?" he asked. The men turned their faces toward the gravediggers.

CHAPTER XII.

O'ROURKE TO THE RESCUE

PENTHOUSE (still known to the army as Señor Cuddlehead) sat in the colonel's bedroom in an unenviable frame of mind. He had been a fool to show himself to Hemming. He had been a fool to put any faith in these niggers. Why, the little cowards were afraid to break into the house, — afraid to face five white men and a couple of women. And now that Hemming had seen him again, and again in a decidedly unfavourable light, what mercy could he expect if Hemming ever got out of the President's villa? Whatever he could do must be done quickly. He looked at the colonel, who lay in drunken half-slumber on the bed.

"You don't seem to be carrying out our plans," he said.

The Brazilian groaned, and muttered something in his own tongue, which, fortunately, the other could not translate. "We must carry off the women to-night. Our chances of getting what we want

lessen every hour. If help comes from the coast, then what will happen? Half a dozen men could run your dirty army out of the country." With every unheeded word, Penthouse's anger grew. The colonel sprawled there, murmuring that he felt very ill. Penthouse jumped up and shook him violently.

"Wake up, you drunken hog!" he shouted; "wake up, and get to work."

The colonel opened his eyes.

"The ladies — they are gone. They went — long ago."

He closed his eyes again.

"You fool!" cried Penthouse, trembling with rage and disappointment, "you fool, didn't I tell you to put a guard on the boat, and to surround the house?"

"The guard went — to Pedro's — to buy wine. I did not hear till to-day. I was angry," replied the Brazilian, in a faint and broken voice.

"To buy wine," echoed the white man, in a tragic cry. Failure grinned at him again. Even in battle and murder he could not succeed. He almost found it in him to regret the vagrant, hungry days on the London streets, when he went up and down among familiar faces, tattered and disguised. He was at home there, at least, and knew the tricks of the place. But here, hunted by Hemming for

a murderer, penniless, and among strangers, — Lord, one would be better dead.

"Hemming must never get away from that house," he whispered to himself.

The colonel snorted and choked in his heavy sleep. For a few minutes the broken Englishman looked at him intently. Then he walked over to a small table by the window. "There is still liquor that I don't have to pay for," he said, and lifted the bottle.

Through the President's gardens and the streets of the little town, the troopers sauntered and smoked, awaiting further orders from their colonel for the undoing of the passive enemy.

"The colonel and Señor Cuddlehead are closeted together," said a subaltern to a sergeant, "so before dark we shall have our money."

"But the ladies have gone," replied the sergeant. "They went away in the President's steamer while the guard was shaking dice at Pedro's."

"How do you know that?" argued the officer. "No one saw them go. Of course they keep away from the windows."

"The General Hemming would see that we got our money, if the ladies were in any danger," said the other, conclusively. But the subaltern shook his head.

"You don't know these fools of Englishmen as well as I do," he said. "They would rather have their own grandmothers shot than pay out any money."

"But," retorted the sergeant, with a knowing look, "it is not the general's money we want, but the President's. He would force the old man to pay, if the ladies were in peril. No, the women have gone with the steamer, I am sure."

"Englishmen are stubborn brutes," replied the officer, unconvinced, "and besides, my friend, this Hemming believes that with his own right arm he is able to defend the house against us. Also, my friend, why should he give us Tetson's money until we force him to? It may all be his some day."

The besieged wondered why more shooting was not done. What fun could the little men find in a smokeless revolution? Did they still cling to the hope of receiving back pay? Did they still believe the family to be in the villa? Hemming, seated by the window, with his rifle across his knees, wondered when they would begin to humble his arrogance. Valentine Hicks, eating quinine and prowling from room to room, and window to window, with his Winchester under his arm, lived over and over again his parting with Marion. Smith, armed like a pirate, and itching for a fight, was happier

than he had ever been. He had a heavy strain of the bulldog in him, had this valet named Smith, also a fine respect for gentlemen, and a love of their companionship.

It was dark in the gardens. Smith was downstairs in the billiard-room, motionless and wide awake. Hemming and Hicks were smoking, one on each side of the upper hall window, which overlooked the front steps, the driveway, and the great gates.

"The poor fellows will be sadly disappointed when they get in and find the Tetsons and the money gone," remarked Hemming, calmly, "though their stupidity in thinking them still here beats me."

"There are some things of value in the house," replied Hicks.

"Oh, yes; they might melt the silver," suggested Hemming, "but the furniture would bother them. Of course they will tear up the place, and pot us, and try to get revenge that way."

"Yes," replied Hicks, "but I have a little stone about me." He opened his linen tunic, and unfastened a narrow cartridge-belt. "I wear it next my skin," he said, "and it galls me a bit sometimes." He drew a brass shell from one of the loops and with his penknife extracted a cork and a wad of cotton wool. Then he shook something

white and rough, but glowing dimly, into the palm of Hemming's hand. He laughed softly.

"The bridegroom's gift to the bride," he said, — "if the bridegroom gets to the church."

Hemming gazed at it in silence.

"Cut and polished, what would it be worth?" asked its owner. His voice was low and eager. He placed a trembling hand on his friend's knee.

"I have seen diamonds in the rough before," replied Hemming, "but never one as large as this. Brazilian stones vary a good deal in quality. It may stand for a fortune, or perhaps for nothing more than a respectable cottage, with stables, a paddock, and an orchard, and maybe a shooting in Scotland."

"That would do for us," said Hicks, grinning like a schoolboy. "Old Tetson could manage the orchard, and Mrs. Tetson could see that he didn't get his feet wet." For a few moments he seemed to be following this dream of bucolic bliss.

Then he continued: "I bought it in Pernambuco last December from a drunken sailor, a cook or something like that, who had run away from a wind-jammer. He didn't think much of it. It had been given him by an old woman, — at least, so he said, but more likely he stole it. I paid fifteen

milreis for it, — fifteen *milreis,* with the exchange at ninepence."

"Put it away," said Hemming, "and keep that belt next your hide, no matter how much it galls."

Hicks replaced the stone in the empty shell, and the shell in his belt.

"And she thinks I haven't a cent," he whispered. "Isn't she a brick?"

The Englishman leaned back, out of range of the open window, and relit his cigar. Suddenly Hicks bent forward, listening.

"Did you hear that?" he said.

But Hemming had heard no unusual sound, only the footsteps of their guards, and the noise of men singing at the barracks.

"It's the first time I have heard an old 'Sam Peabody' in Brazil," said the American.

"Who?" said Hemming, wondering if his friend's temperature had gone up again.

"It's a bird, some sort of sparrow we have in the North," replied Hicks. He left the hall quietly, and hung out of a window in his own room. Presently, from the shrubbery below him, came the familiar notes again. He wet his lips with his tongue, and whistled the clear call himself. He was answered immediately. He peered down into the dim garden. The only light was that of the

stars. He could see nothing. No leaf stirred in the shrubbery, and there was neither sight nor sound of the enemy on that side of the house.

"If you don't intend to let us in," said a quiet voice, "you might pass out a couple of drinks."

"Whiskey and soda for me," said the voice of Captain Santosa.

Hicks ran down-stairs, and Hemming followed him. They unbarred a window, and Smith stood ready with his rifle at port. In crawled O'Rourke and Santosa, very wet as to clothing, but very dry inside.

"The Campbells have arrived," said O'Rourke, brushing mud from his leggings. Hemming, for a moment, was dumbfounded at this unexpected appearance.

"God bless you, Bertram," he said at last, and they shook hands warmly.

"I thought, a few days ago, that it was chance that brought me to Brazil," said O'Rourke, "but really, little fellow, it must have been your guardian angel. What a chap you are for getting into silly messes. There seems to be a row whenever you arrive."

"This row is not Hemming's fault," protested Hicks. O'Rourke and Hemming laughed happily,

for both felt that, together, they could pull out of the worst scrape ever invented.

"This gentleman would come," said Santosa, "and at a pace that nearly wore me to the bone."

Just then Smith held a tray toward the late arrivals.

"We left McPhey organizing a relief expedition to come by land," O'Rourke informed them, after quenching his thirst, "and the major, after doing his business, will bring a party up by boat, — a company or two of government troops."

"Where did you leave the horses?" asked Hemming.

"Up the trail a little way, with a dusky admirer of yours," replied O'Rourke.

The besieged returned to the upper hall. Hicks gave a clear though somewhat lengthy account of the rebellion. Santosa told them of his ride to Pernambuco and O'Rourke gave such news as he could of the outside world. Hemming, with his eyes on the dark blue square of the window, tried to formulate a plan by which five men might protect themselves and the property against five hundred a day or two longer. He knew that, if the colonel really intended violence, the crisis must soon come.

Santosa kicked off his boots, and went to sleep

on the floor. Hicks, seated with his rifle across his knees, also slipped away to the land of Nod.

"If you have no objections," remarked O'Rourke, "I will take a bath. Hope the enemy won't make any hostile move while I'm splashing."

Hemming lit another cigar, and continued his watch by the open window. His arm pained him a good deal, so it was not hard to keep awake. He heard the guards tramping about, and now and then a few words of conversation, or a snatch of laughter. He heard music and shouting in the distance, and sometimes the faint and hurried clatter of hoofs. All the windows in the town seemed alight. A cool wind stole across the palms. His thoughts left the foolish, drunken men without, and the adventurers within, and journeyed, with the wind, far beyond the black palms and the little city. The report of a rifle brought him to his feet with a jump. Hicks also was out of his chair. Santosa was pulling on his boots. They hurried down-stairs followed by O'Rourke in a bath-towel.

"If it's a fight," said O'Rourke, "I'll dry myself and join you. If it's just skirmishing, I'll go back to my tub."

They found Smith at his post in the billiard-room.

"What is the trouble?" asked Hemming.

"Family quarrel, I believe, sir," replied the valet.

"Two people have been talking English for quite awhile, just a little way off that window. Then some one fired a shot, and they dusted. Think it was one of the guards, sir, who fired. Drunk, I suppose."

"What were they talking about?" asked Hemming.

"Well, sir, I couldn't catch much of it," replied Smith, "but there was something said about Mr. Tetson's steamer, the *Alligator,* and about the firemen and engineers being prisoners. From what I could gather, she was captured about half a mile down-stream to-night on her way up. One of the men said that he had got a job on her, because he had some important business to attend to up here."

"The devil!" exclaimed Hicks. "I bet they had a letter for me."

CHAPTER XIII.

THE UNEXPECTED SAILOR

MORNING came, and with it the colonel, on Hemming's white stallion.

"I see," said he, in Portuguese, "that Captain Santosa has returned."

Hemming nodded. The colonel pressed a tremulous hand to a flushed forehead.

"Damn it," he cried, "I would not have done so. This place is the devil. The ice factory has shut down, and my drink has been warm for two days."

"Very interesting," replied the Englishman, "but if you have nothing more important to tell me, you will excuse me if I return to my bed."

The colonel raised his hand.

"One moment," said he.

Then he ordered his men out of ear-shot. He rolled a cigarette, and lit it with unseemly deliberation.

"I have been remarkably polite and friendly," he said, "but now I have your steamer, and the crew in prison, and unless, my dear fellow, we can

agree — " He stopped, and removed his hat, the better to rub his brow. Hemming yawned.

" The army," continued the Brazilian, " is in a dangerous mood. Unless you give me five thousand *milreis* to-night, — only five thousand *milreis,* — I fear that I can restrain my brave soldiers no longer. But say nothing of it to Señor Cuddlehead."

" Give me time to shave," said Hemming, " and then — "

" And then? " asked the colonel.

" Why, and then," repeated Hemming, " tell the little beasts not to be restrained any longer. As for the money — you may go to the devil for that."

The colonel sighed, and mopped his neck with his wilted handkerchief.

" It is too warm to fight," he said.

" You will find it so," retorted the Englishman.

The colonel looked up helplessly.

" My army," he sighed, " how can I restrain it? I hate to fight, and my head aches. But my army must have some money."

" I don't see my way to help you," said Hemming.

" The revolution is a failure unless you surrender and pay," cried the colonel. " Don't you understand, my dear Hemming? I do not like bloodshed, but — well, you have ruined our gentler plan."

" You might carry away the table silver," replied

Hemming, "but there is no money. That has all gone to the coast. No doubt the house and furniture, and even the forks and spoons, belong by now to the Brazilian government. It would be foolish of you to damage government property for the sake of a few pounds. It would mean trouble, my friend."

The colonel sagged in his saddle like a bag of meal.

"I cannot argue," he said, listlessly. "It is too hot to talk. My head aches — the devil take it. You should not have sent the money."

"A touch of sun," suggested Hemming.

The fat Brazilian looked at the blue sky through bloodshot, half-closed eyes.

"The sun," he said, "why, yes, the sun. Damn the sun."

He swayed for a moment, and then slid in a heap to the ground. His men had been watching him, and now two of them ran forward and carried the yielding, flabby body to the nearest fountain.

"Sun and whiskey," commented Hemming. Then he returned to his bedroom and commenced to shave.

By this time the little garrison was astir. Hicks, with a sandwich in one hand and his rifle in the other, opened the shutters of one of the lower windows and looked out. Not ten feet away stood a man in a blue cotton shirt, and dirty canvas trousers.

The blotchy, grinning face and bowed legs struck him with an unpleasant sense of familiarity.

"Hello, mister," said the stranger. "I'd like to 'ave a word wid one of you gents."

"Which one?" asked Hicks.

"There you 'ave me," replied the man. "Ye see, I was drunk an' it were a dark night. Don't know as I'd know 'im widout puttin' a few questions." He took a couple of steps toward the open window. Hicks put the remaining portion of the sandwich into his mouth, and shifted the rifle.

"Ease off that thar gun a p'int or two," cried the sailor.

Hicks had been taught, while young, not to talk with his mouth full. So he made no answer.

"I ain't looking fer no trouble," said the seaman. "All I want is ter come aboard an' 'ave a quiet jaw wid you and yer mates, afore this blasted old craft 'awls down 'er colours."

"What about?" asked Hicks.

"That thar dimund, skipper," replied the man, with an evil grin.

Hicks changed colour. O'Rourke stuck his head out of the window. He glared at the man in the blue shirt for several seconds.

"Belay that talk," he said, "and stop up the slack of it neat and shipshape."

The man of the sea rolled his eyes in pained astonishment.

"So it was you, Mr. O'Rourke," he sneered. "Now that's a gentleman's trick for you."

"Yes, it was I kicked you down the hatch, if that is what you are mentioning," replied O'Rourke, "and I think you know enough of me to obey my orders on the jump. I've eaten enough of your slush-fried grub to kill a whole ship's crew, you thieving sea-cook. I know you for too big a coward to step out on to the foot-rope, but brave enough to jab a marlinspike between a mate's ribs. So clear out of this."

The seaman shuffled his feet and grinned.

"Not so quick," he retorted; "'and over that dimund an' I'll go, Mister O'Rourke."

"Diamond, you longshore gallows-bird, I don't know what you are talking about, but I'll hand over something that'll make you hop, in a minute," cried O'Rourke, in a fury.

Hicks threw his Winchester to his shoulder. "Come right in," he said, "or I'll blow the third button of your dirty shirt, counting from the top, right through your chest."

The seaman pulled a hideous face, and spat into the dust.

"Guess I'll accept your kind invite," he said.

"It's real civil of gents like you to treat a poor sailorman like this." But he did not move.

O'Rourke eyed him with a new interest, and Hicks squinted along the black barrel.

"Don't trouble about that knife. We will lend you one if we keep you to lunch," said O'Rourke.

The fellow's face widened in a sickly smile as he entered the billiard-room by way of the open window. After relieving him of an amazingly sharp sheath-knife, they tied his hands and feet and locked him safe in an empty room.

"You see, O'Rourke, I am the man he is after; I have the diamond he talks about," explained Hicks.

O'Rourke whistled softly, and smiled inquiringly at the big fever-thinned secretary.

"Take it from him?" he queried.

"I bought it from him," replied Hicks, "and it's on me now."

"Hold on to it, then, old chap," said O'Rourke, "and don't gab. He hates me, anyway, so he may just as well keep on thinking I have the stone. He was cook aboard a barquentine in which I made a voyage last year. I was a passenger, — the skipper's friend, — and when the skipper was sick I had to interview the cook once or twice."

The colonel died that evening, at a quarter past six, of too much rum and whiskey and not enough

medical treatment. His soldiers had done their best to save his life. Three of them, with the best intentions, held him upside down in a fountain for a good fifteen minutes, at the very beginning of his illness. Then they had carried him to his own quarters, and watched him expire.

The Señor Cuddlehead now took command, for the officers were in a funk. Through an interpreter he lectured and encouraged the men. He assured them that, should Hemming escape from the house alive, they would all swing for it, sooner or later; and that should they capture and bear away the other inmates, every man would find himself rich. What matter if the ladies had escaped, he said — surely the friends of Mr. Hicks would gladly pay a great ransom, should they succeed in carrying him away to the hills.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE ATTACK

WHEN news of the colonel's death reached Hemming, he sighed with relief.

"That ends it," he said. "The old man was a fool, but he held them together."

"What about that Penthouse-Cuddlehead chap? He seems to be taking an interest in it," said Hicks.

"He is sneak enough for anything, but he is also a coward," replied Hemming.

"This is a poor sort of revolution," said O'Rourke. "I have had more excitement waiting for my mail at the window of a country post-office. A Sunday-school treat beats it hands down. Davis could invent a better one in his sleep."

"Please don't talk like an ass, old chap," said Hemming. He found the revolution quite exciting enough.

"I shall go and look at my prisoner — he may be in a better humour than you," remarked O'Rourke, pensively.

Hicks followed him to the door of the locked room.

"These duffers don't want to fight. They never did, either. It was all a bluff of the colonel's," he said.

The other shook his head.

"Wait until we hear from Hemming's enemy. I think he'll take a turn before we get out of this," he replied. "He has played poor old Hemming some low tricks before now," he added, and gave Hicks a hint of the trouble in Hemming's past. Hicks passed on and descended to the billiard-room, and O'Rourke paused at the door. He turned the key and stepped into the room. He dodged before his eyes had warned him of danger. The huge fist landed on a point of his left shoulder, and sent him spinning across the room. He recovered himself in time to partially evade the seaman's bull-like rush. Staggered and hurt, he closed with his antagonist, wondering dully if the fellow had broken the cords, or had worked the knots loose. It did not occur to him to call for help. The door had closed behind him. The mariner's huge arms seemed to force his very heart out of its place. The bowed, sturdy legs wrenched at his knees. The hot, evil breath burned against his neck. For a moment the pain of it closed his eyes. He was bent nearly double, and pin-points

of light flashed in his brain. Then he recovered his wits and his courage. He twisted himself so that his shoulder caught the sailor's chin. This gave him a chance to breathe, and eased the crushing weight upon his ribs. It was O'Rourke's belief that, in a rough and tumble fight, without knives, and muscles being equal, the gentleman has always the advantage of the plebeian. So once again he settled himself to prove it. But this time the plebeian was unusually desperate. He wanted a diamond, and he hated the man his hands were upon. All his superiors were detestable to his uncouth soul. He had feared O'Rourke before this. Now he felt no fear — only a mad desire to knock the breath out of that well-kept body, and mark with blood the hard-set, scornful face. Then for the coast again, with the stone of fabulous price. For a minute or two O'Rourke played a waiting game. Twice, by his quickness and length of leg, he avoided a bad throw. His back and neck had some close calls. After discovering that he was in better condition than his opponent, he began to force matters. Within ten minutes of his entrance, he knelt upon the sailor's bulky shoulders, and with colourless lips muttered strange oaths. Though his eyes were bright, he was not nice to look at.

The original savage glared exultingly from that

white face. The sailor lay still, with blood from lips and nose staining the floor, a pitiful and ungainly figure.

Presently O'Rourke got to his feet and staggered from the room. Smith caught him just in time to help him to a chair. It had been a big effort for a warm day.

Hicks nursed the mariner back to his miserable existence. This required only a few minutes, for brandy had an almost magic effect upon this outcast of the sea. He emptied one decanter, and, seeing no chance of a second, made a dash for the open window, taking the sill in a flying jump. But the window was on the second floor. When Smith went out to look at the body there was no trace of it.

"I could have sworn," said Hicks, with a shudder, "that I heard his neck break, but maybe it was just the bushes giving way."

The night was bright with stars. The little garrison sat up and smoked by the open windows. On the lower floor, windows were shuttered and barred, and doors were locked. If this game of war were worth playing at all, it was worth playing well. Shortly before midnight some one staggered up to the front of the house, carrying a paper lantern at the end of a stick, and singing. The guards jeered

him. It was the sea-cook, drunk and bedraggled. He stopped his song in the middle of a line, and waved his lantern toward the window above him.

"Come out," he bawled, "an' gimme that di-mund. Gesh you thought I couldn't jump out er that windy, didn't yer? Gesh yer'll be jumpin' outa it yerself perty soon."

The lantern caught fire, and the gaudy paper globe went up in a little burst of flame. The man threw it from him, and lurched on to the veranda. A scattered volley broke, here and there, from the garden. A few bullets pinged into the woodwork of the windows. Shouts of laughter went up from the clusters of trees and shrubs. The sailor hammered the front door. The guards sneaked away into the friendly shadows.

"They are all drunk," said Hicks, "and they'll try to rush us, for sure."

"Then the colonel's death was not an unmixed blessing," remarked O'Rourke.

Hemming ordered Smith and Hicks to windows on the other side of the house.

"Shall we shoot over their heads, or may we pump it right into them?" asked Hicks.

"I leave it to your own discretion," replied Hemming.

Smith grinned. He promised himself an easy interpretation of the word.

Hemming took the window in the upper hall, overlooking the front steps and the driveway, himself.

There was not a figure in sight. But the glass of the window lay broken on the floor, and the diamond-hunter kept up his drunken disturbance on the veranda below. The firing out of the shadows continued, and drew nearer. Hemming extinguished his cigar and sat on the floor. He enjoyed quite a novel sensation when a bullet sang its way through the open window, like a great bee, and ripped into a shelf full of books half-way down the hall. He had never before been under fire behind a window. All about him he could hear the thumping of bullets against the tiles of the outer walls. Some one shouted in English, ordering the drunken sailor to come away from the house.

"Yer want my dimund, that's wot yer want," he shouted back, "but yer don't get so much ash a peep at it, see?"

Hemming heard and frowned, as he polished his eye-glass on his sleeve. Two shots sounded in quick succession from a room on the left of the hall. Hemming heard Santosa laugh, and O'Rourke congratulate him. The firing now seemed to centre mostly upon the front of the villa. Hemming, as

yet, had not returned a shot. Suddenly the white man, moved by a drunken whim, left his hammering at the door, and pranced into the starlight. The shooting of his friends was everywhere. Elevation had little attention from them, and an unusually low ball found him out. He did not spring forward with uplifted hands; neither did he clutch at his breast and stagger onward. With an expression of pained astonishment on his face, and a heave of his fat shoulders, he sank to his hips, and then rolled over and lay still. To Hemming, it looked as if his fat legs had simply crumpled under him like paper.

A dozen men charged across the starlit driveway. Hemming dropped two of them. The others ran up the steps and across the veranda, and threw themselves against the door. But they were small men, and the door was a heavy one, and well bolted. Hemming left the window, and at the head of the stairs met O'Rourke.

"A brace and a half to me," said that gentleman, lightly.

The bitter smoke drifted from doorway to doorway through the dark. Hemming got his sword from his bedroom, and he and O'Rourke waited at the top of the stairs.

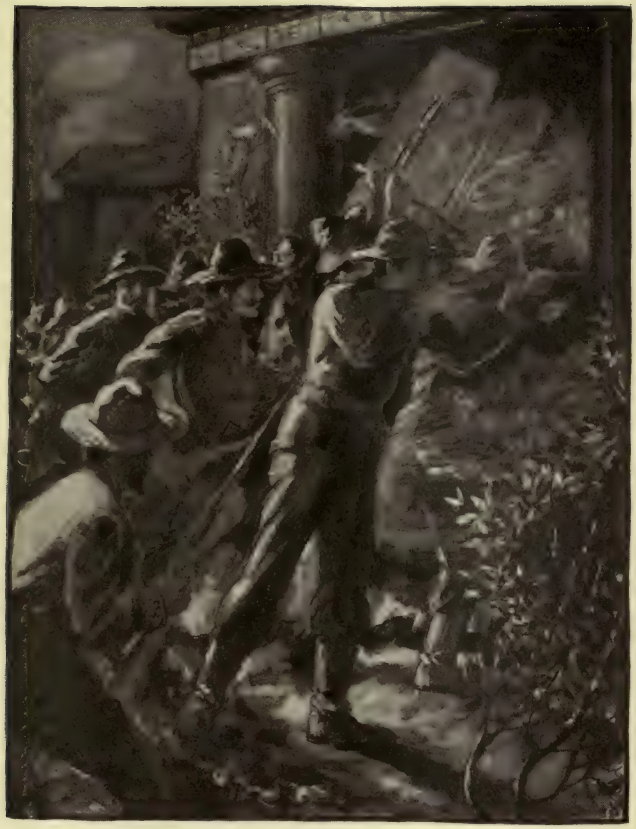
O'Rourke's heart was glad within him. Shoulder to shoulder with a man like Hemming, it would be

a lovely fight. The door could not give in soon enough to suit him. He had ten shots in his revolvers. Then he could break a few heads with his clubbed rifle, surely, and, after that, when they had him down, he could kick for awhile. He did not think of his parents in the North, his friends, his half-written articles, nor his creditors. But he was sorry that Miss Hudson would never hear of his heroic finish.

"We have had some fun together, and I hope this will not be the last," said Hemming. They shook hands. Then the door came in with a rending, sidelong fall. A bunch of men sprang across it and made for the staircase, just discernible to them by the light from the doorway.

"Fire into the brown," said Hemming, quietly.

The four revolvers jumped and spit — once — twice — and the wounded slipped back against their comrades' legs. More men entered the hall below, and filed wildly into the darkness above and around. Then Hicks, Santosa, and Smith left their windows and pumped lead into the housebreakers. The noise was deafening. The air was unfit to breathe. O'Rourke wondered at something hot and wet against his leg. Hemming was angry because none would come within cutting distance. Smith felt very sick, but did not mention the fact. He knelt against



"THE DOOR CAME IN WITH A RENDING, SIDELONG FALL"

the bannisters, and fumbled with the hammer of his revolver, and the blood from a great furrow in his neck ran down one of the polished rounds that supported the carved hand-rail. But it was dark, and he could not see it. But presently he dropped his revolver and felt the blood with his fingers, and wondered, in a dim way, who it was dared to make such a mess in Mr. Tetson's house.

The firing outside the house, which had died away for a minute, increased suddenly, and cries of warning and consternation rang above it. More men came to the open doorway. They were armed with rifles instead of the short carbines of the Pernamba army. They discharged a volley or two into the backs of the scrambling soldiers on the stairs.

"That ends the revolution," remarked Hemming, calmly, removing his monocle from his eye.

"I think we could have done it without help," said Santosa.

The men on the stairs cried for mercy.

"Are you all safe, up there?" asked a voice from the door.

Smith clung to the rounds of the bannisters and closed his eyes, and O'Rourke leaned against the wall with one knee drawn up.

"The same leg," he muttered, and twisted his face at the pain of it.

CHAPTER XV.

REST IN PERNAMBUCO

Miss Tetson and Mr. Valentine Hicks were married in the little English church in Pernambuco. The ex-President gave the bride away, the ex-commander-in-chief supported the groom, and the major supported the clergyman officiating. Mrs. McPhey supplied the wedding breakfast, and McPhey made all the speeches. Then the Tetsons and Hicks sailed away for New York, leaving Herbert Hemming to nurse Mr. O'Rourke and Smith.

The invalids were housed in cool rooms in the McPhey mansion, on the outskirts of the city, and they and Hemming were guests of honour for as long as they would stay in the country.

O'Rourke's leg was in a bad way, but poor Smith's neck was in a worse. For the first week of his attendance the clever American surgeon who had them both in charge felt anxious enough for the valet's life. But modern methods and unflagging

care won the day, and a wound that, in the time of the Crimean War, meant certain death, left nothing but a sunken white scar.

A couple of months passed quietly. Hemming worked at a series of short stories, and learned the gaudy-coloured, easy-going city by heart. He received several letters from Hicks, and heard that the diamond had been sold at a good price. O'Rourke pulled on his riding-boots again, and exercised McPhey's stable, night and morning.

Hemming's white stallion was once more an inmate of this stable. Smith recovered his strength slowly, and spent his days in easeful meditations and unnamed regrets for the good time of fighting and comradeship.

One day, Captain Santosa (who, through the influence of McPhey and the major, had procured a commission in the cavalry regiment stationed in Pernambuco) brought news of Penthouse's death to Hemming. Penthouse had been found in a dying condition in the hut of a poor woman, on the trail above Pernamba, by a party of government troops. He had been shot during the attack upon the President's villa, and, crawling away from the fight, had been found by the peasant woman, and tended by her through his weeks of suffering. She had explained to the officer in command that an English-

man had been kind to her, and for his sake she had housed and nursed this other Englishman. Thus, through Hemming's kindness, had his enemy received kindness.

END OF PART II.

PART THREE

CHAPTER I.

THE REAL GIRL

HEMMING and O'Rourke, with Smith as valet-in-common, reached New York in November, and shivered in their tropical underclothes. The dismal aspect of the great city, as viewed at nine o'clock of a drizzly morning, daunted even the valet. At sight of the wide, wet streets and soaring office buildings, depressing memories of Dodder's death came to Hemming. The chill brought a twinge to O'Rourke's leg, and the swinging, clanging cars and hustling crowds offended his sense of the fitness of things.

In a four-wheeler they went direct to a bachelor apartment-house on Washington Square, in which their friend, Mr. Valentine Hicks, had engaged for them an airy suite of rooms. As they passed under the white archway, entering the old square, their moods lifted.

"I believe I'll feel all right, when I get into a woollen undershirt," said O'Rourke.

Hemming soon settled down to his work. He

was more systematic about it than O'Rourke, working several hours every morning at articles for the magazines, and part of every evening at a novel. O'Rourke, who had many friends and acquaintances in and about Newspaper Row, spent but little of his time at home, and did his work when he had to. Both O'Rourke and Hemming were frequent visitors at another house on the square, where the Hickses and Tetsons lived in comfort. Hemming's novel was built up, chapter by chapter, and relentlessly torn down, only to be rebuilt with much toil. The general outline of the story had come to him years before, one night while he was playing poker in the chart-room of an ocean tramp. He had written a few pages next morning, behind the canvas dodgers of the bridge. Then it had been pushed aside by the press of other work; but he had returned to it now and then, in many parts of the world. The chapters done in Pernamba were the only ones that did not seem to require rewriting. By this time the original plot was almost forgotten, and a more satisfactory one had developed.

One Thursday night, having finished the twentieth chapter as well as he knew how, he changed his clothes and went over to call on Mrs. Hicks. It was her evening. He went alone, for O'Rourke had dined out, and had not returned. About a dozen

people were already there. While he was talking to McFarland of the *Gazette,* he noticed a girl talking to their hostess. Just why she attracted him he could not say for a moment. Mrs. Hicks was more beautiful, and there were at least two women in the room as tastefully gowned. She looked girlish beside her stately hostess. But there was a jaunty, gallant air about the carriage of her head and shoulders, which seemed to Hemming particularly charming. Her voice was deep, and her laughter was unaffected as that of a boy.

"You too?" laughed McFarland.

"I never saw her before," said Hemming.

"Then let me tell you now," said the editor, "that it is no use. Even your eye-glass could not awaken her from her romantic dream."

"Count me out," replied Hemming, dryly, "but tell me something about it."

"All I know," said McFarland, "is that there are ten of us — eleven counting the lucky unknown. We ten used to hate one another, but now we are as brothers in our common misery. But tell me, is it true that you are working on a novel? I don't see what you want to go messing with fiction for, when you can do stuff like that Turkish book."

While Hemming and the journalist chatted aimlessly in Mrs. Hicks's drawing-room, O'Rourke

made history across the square. He had returned to his quarters only a few minutes after his friend had left; and had scarcely got his pipe well lighted when Smith announced "a gentleman to see Captain Hemming, very particularly." O'Rourke got to his feet and found the gentleman already at the sitting-room door. The caller was in evening clothes. His ulster hung open, and in his hand he carried an opera-hat.

"Hemming is out for the evening," said O'Rourke, "but perhaps I can give him your message. Come in, won't you?"

The stranger entered and sat down by the fire. He glanced about the walls of the room, and then fixed an intent, though inoffensive, gaze on O'Rourke.

"I heard, only this morning, that Hemming was in town," he said. "We saw a good deal of each other, once, in Porto Rico."

"In Porto Rico?" exclaimed O'Rourke, knitting his brows.

"Yes. Have you ever been there?"

"No, though I've sampled most of the islands. But go on — I interrupted you. I beg your pardon."

"Don't speak of it. I only came for the address of a friend of Hemming's. But perhaps you could

tell me in what quarter of the globe Mr. O'Rourke hangs out? He's a literary chap, and maybe you know him."

"Bertram St. Ives O'Rourke?"

"Yes."

"Yes, I know him. He is in town just now, at 206 Washington Square."

"Why, that must be very near here."

"It is," replied O'Rourke, with a strange light in his eyes and a huskiness in his voice.

"Let me see," mused the other, "this is the Wellington, number two hundred and — Lord, this is the place."

His dark face paled suddenly.

"My name is O'Rourke," remarked the big man with the pipe.

"And mine is Ellis," said the other.

They eyed each other squarely for several seconds.

"I have heard of you," said O'Rourke, in modulated tones. But all the while the blood was singing in his ears, and splashing wisps of light crossed his eyes.

"And I of you," replied Ellis, quietly. He had not yet regained his colour. O'Rourke, outwardly calm, turned in his chair and searched among the papers on the table. He found a leather cigar-case, opened it, and extended it to his visitor.

"Try one of these. We like them immensely," he said.

Now the red surged into Ellis's face, and he hesitated to receive the cigar.

"Don't you know — how I have treated you?" he whispered.

"Please try a smoke — and then tell me why you came for my address. The past is done with. I am only afraid of the future now."

Ellis drew the long black weed from the extended case, and deliberately prepared it for smoking. When it was burning to his satisfaction, he said:

"Do you know where the Hickses live?"

"Yes. Hemming is there to-night."

"So is Miss Hudson," remarked Ellis.

O'Rourke jumped from his chair, and grasped the other by both hands. Then he dashed into his bedroom and shouted for Smith. When he was half-dressed he remembered that he had forgotten to ask any questions, or even to be excused, while he changed his clothes. He looked into the sitting-room.

"Forgive my bad manners, Mr. Ellis. You see I'm in rather a rush," he said, gaily.

"Oh, certainly," exclaimed Ellis, starting up from a gloomy contemplation of the fire. He crossed over and smiled wanly at O'Rourke.

"If you don't mind," he said, "I wish you'd keep quiet about my part in — in this affair. She would despise me, you know — and I couldn't stand that."

"But I can tell her about to-night — about your kindness," suggested O'Rourke.

Ellis shook his head and smiled bitterly.

"She may not look at it in so charitable a light as you do," he replied, "so please put it all down to chance. She does not know that I have ever heard of you, except from her."

O'Rourke promised, and, after shaking hands, Ellis left his rival to complete his toilet. This he did in short order.

To return to the drawing-room across the square. By degrees Hemming drifted half around the room, and at last found himself against the wall, between the door from the hallway and the table containing the punch-bowl.

He was feeling a bit weary of it all, and sought refreshment in the bowl. He had almost decided to go home, when the door at his elbow opened, and to his surprise O'Rourke entered, resplendent in white breast, black tails, and eager smile. This comrade tried and true passed him without a glance — worse still, strode between his host and hostess without a sign of recognition. Glass in hand, and monocle

flashing, Hemming wheeled and stared after him. Others looked in the same direction. Valentine and Marion smiled sheepishly at their empty, extended hands. But the lady of the gallant, shapely shoulders and unaffected laughter faced the late arrival with the most wonderful expression in the world on her face. For a moment she seemed to waver. Then strong hands clasped hers.

"Bertram," she sighed.

"Dearest — am I too late?"

"But — oh, what do you mean? See, they are all looking."

"I love you. Didn't I ever tell you? And I have searched the world for you."

"Hush — see, they are all staring at us. Oh, stop, or I shall certainly cry."

She snatched her hands away from his eager grasp.

"But tell me," he begged, in a whisper, before she could turn away. For a wonderful second their eyes read what the years of longing had set behind the iris for love to translate. Then she bowed her face, and answered "Yes."

He did not know if she shouted it, or but murmured it beneath her breath; it rang through his body and spirit like the chiming of a bell.

"Drag me away," he whispered to Hicks. "I don't want to make an ass of myself before all these people."

"You've done that already. Come into my study," said Hicks.

Hemming, scenting the truth, followed them.

"What is the matter with you?" asked Hicks.

"Don't you know your friends? Is that the real girl?" asked Hemming.

O'Rourke ignored the questions.

"Give me a drink of something," he said, and, recovering a little of his composure, smote Hemming violently on the back.

"Is it the real girl?" repeated Hemming, staggering.

"Do you think I'd make a mistake?" cried the lover. He swallowed the brandy brought him by Hicks, and requested a cigarette. Their host supplied it from a tin box on the mantelpiece, all the while eyeing O'Rourke anxiously.

"What on earth made you act like that?" he asked. "There'll be wigs on the green when Marion gets hold of you."

"Oh, you must forgive him this time," laughed Hemming. "For, as far as I can gather, he has just met the lady of his heart after years of separation."

"Do you mean Miss Hudson? Why, where did you ever meet her?" cried Hicks.

"It's a long story," replied O'Rourke, "but perhaps Herbert will tell it to you — I can't spare the time."

He threw the half-smoked cigarette into the grate, and left the study, closing the door behind him.

Hicks glanced uneasily at Hemming.

"I hope O'Rourke is not drunk," he said. "An out and out city square poet, who stays at home and writes about the rolling billows, I can understand, but I never know what chaps like you and O'Rourke are up to."

Hemming laughed.

"Don't worry about O'Rourke," he said.

Later in the evening Hemming found a gray-haired gentleman standing alone, lost in contemplation of a black and white hunting picture. He seemed dazed, and ill at ease.

"Mr. Hemming," he said, "my name is Hudson, and my daughter has just introduced me to a Mr. O'Rourke. Have you ever met him?"

"Several times," replied Hemming.

"A gentleman, I suppose?"

"Certainly."

"A man of property?"

"Inconsiderable."

"An adventurer, perhaps?"

"Just as I am."

"But, my dear sir, your connections and your reputation as a writer places you above suspicion. I had frequently heard of you before the Pernamba episode."

"Thank you," said Hemming, with a crispness in his voice.

"But this man O'Rourke?" continued the other.

"O'Rourke," said Hemming, "lacks neither personal distinction nor respectable family connections. I have watched him under the most trying circumstances, and his behaviour has always been above criticism. Also, he happens to be my dearest friend."

CHAPTER II.

A NEW RESTLESSNESS

"All night long, in the dark and wet,
A man goes riding by." . . . R. L. S.

DURING the first few days following O'Rourke's sensational meeting with Miss Hudson, Hemming saw very little of that headstrong young man, for the lover spent his afternoons and evenings in making up for lost time, and his mornings in rearing Spanish castles. At first Hemming took joy in his friend's happiness — then came envy, and bleak disgust at his own case. He sought refuge in hard work, and toiled every morning with a half-heart for the subject in hand, and ears pricked up for O'Rourke's babble of joy and content. And behold, at the end of a morning's grind, twenty pages for the fire. Even his novel came to a standstill. The chapter of romance, which had the joyful meeting of O'Rourke and Miss Hudson for its inspiration, seemed to have no connection with the rest of the narrative, and no excuse for existence save its own

beauty. He wondered if this chapter were a story in itself — a breath of life's real poetry, too fine and rare for marketing. One night, alone in the sitting-room brooding above the manuscript, he tried to rewrite it in verse. A new restlessness had him by the heart, lifting him, one moment, to the heights of confidence, only to drag him down, the next, to the depths of uncertainty and longing. Three lines pulsed up to his brain, and he wrote them down. Then he opened his sitting-room window and looked out. The lights in the square gleamed down on the wet pavement. The black tree-tops threshed in the wind. A cab sped down from Fifth Avenue, under the arch. A policeman paused beneath him, and yawned at the bright entrance.

Hemming sniffed the wind, and decided to go for a walk. He circled the square three times. Then he struck up Fifth Avenue, with his hands in the pockets of his mackintosh and his stick under his arm. The big old houses on each side of the avenue wore an air of kindness that was not for him. Lights were in the upper windows of most of them. One was still awake, and carriages waited in a solemn row at the curb. It seemed to Hemming that all the world but himself was at peace. The coachmen and footmen waited contentedly outside, while their masters and mistresses laughed and danced within.

What had these people to do with the bitterness of the unattainable? His eyes were turned in upon his own heart, and nothing seemed real but this new restlessness, this nameless desire like a crying in the dark. It was not for fame, nor altogether for the power of expression, though that, at one time or another, will tear the heart of every artist. It was not bred of any regret for the past, nor inspired by apprehension for the future. On the fly-leaf of a friend's book he had once read the words, "There is only the eternal now — an oasis of fleeting actuality between two deserts of mirage." Now he remembered the words as he strolled up Fifth Avenue. The Eternal Now! Could it give him no more solace than this? For him would it be always this empty room, from the windows of which he might look backward upon one mirage and forward to another? He felt in his pockets for something to smoke. They were empty, so he decided to keep on until he could find a tobacconist's establishment. Deep in thought, buffeted and yet soothed by the bleak wind, he strode along, with little heed to his course. Presently, upon glancing up, he found himself on a side street, before the area railings of a basement restaurant that he knew well. Here he could get a Porto Rican cigar to which he was particularly partial, or cigarettes of pungent tobacco

rolled in sweet brown paper. He opened the iron gate, descended the steps, and rang the signal of the initiated on the bell. The Italian woman opened the door, and smilingly admitted him. In the larger of the two dining-rooms only one table was occupied, for stray customers were not welcomed after the regular dinner hours. At the table sat two men whom Hemming knew, and one who was a stranger to him. They were drinking coffee and smoking, and from a chafing-dish in the centre of the table drifted an odour with a tang to it.

Upon Hemming's entrance, Potts, assistant editor of a ten-cent magazine, called to him to join them. The Englishman did so, gladly. Akerly, the illustrator, he knew, and he was introduced to the third, a thick-shouldered, blond-haired youth, by name Tarmont. Tarmont also proved to be an artist. He was a Canadian by birth, and had just arrived in New York from a two years' visit in England.

"I was staying in Norfolk awhile," he said, "with some cousins, and I met a friend of yours." He looked intently at Hemming as he spoke, and Hemming started eagerly in his chair. But in a moment he sat quiet again.

"More than one, for that matter," continued Tarmont. "There was Major Anderson, — he talked a great deal of you one night, after some one had

mentioned wars, and that sort of thing, — and there was an old chap who argued about you with an old dame, the same evening. Really, your memory seemed to bulk large in their eyes." He paused, and smiled at his companions. "Oh, I forgot," he added; "there was a lady — very pretty, too — who stopped playing ping-pong with me to listen to what they were saying about Captain Hemming. Of course she didn't give that for a reason."

"What was her name?" asked Hemming.

Tarmont shook his head, and, producing his cigarette-case, lit a mild, fat Turkish.

"I'm no good at names," he said, "but she seemed to be about twenty-eight in age, and was beautifully set up, a trifle on the thin side — and had ripping fine eyes, and hair with copper in it."

Even Hemming laughed.

"You must have spent all your precious time staring at her," remarked Potts.

"Well, I did," confessed the artist, "for I was in love with her, man. Even now, whenever I draw a girl I make her waist and her arms. As for the look in her eyes — my dear fellow, I can never forget it."

"What sort of a look was it?" asked Akerly, hugely amused.

"A look of longing," replied Tarmont, in tragic

tones. "It was deucedly disconcerting, too, for the man she happened to be talking to. It always made me feel as if I had a hole in the middle of my chest, through which she could see some chap whom she was anxious to embrace. We all noticed that Anderson didn't like it at all."

Potts and Akerly roared with laughter.

"You should be a novelist," said Potts.

Akerly ordered a round-bellied, wicker-covered flask. But Hemming only pondered over what he heard.

It was close upon two o'clock in the morning when Hemming got back to the Wellington. He found O'Rourke snug in his bed, smiling even in his sleep. He closed the bedroom doors softly, stirred up the fire, and sat down to his story. Still the wind galloped through the square, slashing the tree-tops, and riding against the house-fronts.

It was dawn when Hemming laid aside his pen, knocked the smouldering heel from his pipe, and went wearily to bed.

CHAPTER III.

A ROLLING STONE

THE life of New York did not suit Hemming, although his work progressed at a round pace. He awoke in the mornings to no expectations of joy or adventure. The dulness of each approaching day weighed upon him even before his eyes opened. He saw but little of O'Rourke after the luncheon hour, and, though he and Tarmont became quite friendly, loneliness made his days miserable. He began to regret even the foolish, anxious days of the Pernamba revolution. In his blue mood he would sometimes call on the Tetsons and Hickses — but, alas, in conventional environment they had lost much of their charm. Hicks was growing fat and self-complacent. Marion was growing commonplace under the burden of formalities. Even the old man was undergoing a change — had already been weaned from his yellow cigar and taught to wear a four-in-hand necktie until dinner-time. As for Mrs. Tetson, kindly soul, why, she now spent most of

her days in contented slumber, and sometimes drove in the park of an afternoon.

Hemming sometimes went to dinner at the Hudsons' with O'Rourke. Mrs. Hudson was dead, and Helen and her father made up the family. Hemming found these evenings quite worth while. Miss Hudson was as clever as she was charming, and as sympathetic as she was original. Mr. Hudson was a kind-hearted, exceedingly well-bred banker, with a cultivated taste in wines and cigars. Under his daughter's leadership he sometimes talked brilliantly. After these dinners Hemming would always stay as long as he could without feeling himself in the way; then, after a word or two with Mr. Hudson in the library, he would return to the lonely sitting-room and write letters to Miss Travers. These he burned as soon as written. This was foolishness, and worried Smith a good deal.

Tarmont, who guessed Hemming's case, got into the habit of dropping in on his new friend at unseemly hours. If Hemming wanted to talk, Tarmont was ready to listen. If Hemming wanted to listen, Tarmont was glad to chat about his stay in England. If Hemming wanted to continue his work, Tarmont was delighted to smoke in silence, — always those fat Eastern cigarettes, — with his heels on any convenient piece of furniture that happened

to be higher than his head. One night he brought a chap named Stanley along with him. On this occasion his visit was timed many hours earlier than usual — in fact, Hemming was only half-way through his first cigarette since dinner. Stanley interested Hemming from the first — all the more so because Tarmont whispered, while Stanley was examining a shelf of books, that he would not stand for his companion's behaviour, or anything else, as he had met him for the first time only that morning.

Stanley looked and sounded like a man without a care in the world, though in his black hair shone threads of silver. His manner was of complete good-humour, despite the suggestion of heartless deviltry in his dark eyes. His complexion was of a swarthy clearness, like a Spaniard's, and in the cleft of his massive chin gleamed a small triangular scar. Something about him suggested to Hemming a gull blown inland. He talked of a dozen things dear to Hemming's heart, — of salmon fishing in Labrador, of the sea's moods, of London, of polo, and of current literature, — treating each from the view-point of an outsider. The others were contented to sit quiet and listen. Many of his adventures by land and sea would have been laughed at by ordinary stay-at-homes, or even by Cook's tourists, but Hemming's knowledge of such things

enabled him to see probabilities where Tarmont suspected lies. He was still spinning yarns when O'Rourke came in.

Several days passed before Hemming again saw Stanley — restless, painful days for Hemming, for Stanley's stories had reawakened all that was vagrant in his blood; the other side of his heart was longing for England, and pride and self-ordained duty held him in New York. Also, the condition of his dearest friend was getting on his nerves. To see the man who had so often sworn that change and adventure were the breath of life to him eyeing furniture with calculating glances, pricing dinner-sets, and drawing plans of cottages on the margins of otherwise neglected manuscripts, struck him as verging on the idiotic. So he prowled about the town, and smoked more than Smith considered good for him. Late one night, upon leaving an up-town studio, where a pale youth made priceless posters and delectable coffee, he was overtaken by Stanley.

"Where are you off to?" asked Stanley.

"Home," replied Hemming.

"Are you sleepy?"

"No."

"Then I wish you'd let me come along. I want to talk."

Hemming assured him that he would be delighted

to listen, and, hailing a belated cab, they drove to Washington Square. O'Rourke and Smith were both asleep. Hemming closed their doors, and lit a couple of candles to help the firelight make shadows up the walls. Then Stanley told something of his story. In his youth he had inherited a small fortune. At first he had spent it foolishly, but after years of knocking about, had learned how to save it, and even add to it. The sea had been his ambition and delight ever since his first days of freedom. Early in his career he had qualified as a navigator. He told of trading-schooners in Newfoundland and Labrador, in which he was interested; of a copper-mine somewhere that he had discovered himself, and sold to an English syndicate; of a venture in the sponge-fishery off the Florida coast, and of his apprenticeship to pearl-diving. He told of a blunt-nosed old barque in which he owned a one-third interest and on which he had sailed as master for half a dozen voyages, doing a very profitable smuggling business on the side. He even confessed to an irregular career as a journalist in Australia.

"I have always found my profits," he said, "and managed to live well enough. It is an easy world, if you have any brains at all, but, for all that, it is horrible. The longer a man lives — the oftener he

saves himself from defeat — the gayer he makes his fun — then, when he lies awake at night, the more he has to sweat and pray about."

Hemming nodded. "They pile up," he remarked; then, fearing that gloomy reflections might get the better of his guest's desire to talk, he asked him why he had given up his berth aboard the barque.

"Had important business to look after ashore," replied Stanley. In bending over the table to light a cigarette at a candle, he looked keenly at his host.

"And there was another reason — a damn sight better one," he said, quietly.

He sank back in his chair and blew a thin thread of smoke.

"We were in Bahia with fish," he continued, "and I got foul of one of the hands — for the last time. The memory of his big face makes me feel ill to this day."

"What!" exclaimed Hemming. "Do you mean to tell me you let one of the crew lay you away?"

"Not quite," laughed Stanley, harshly. He touched the scar on his chin. "That's what he gave me — with a knuckle-duster," he explained, "and what I gave him he took ashore to the hospital. His

messmates were not particularly fond of him, but, for all that, I considered it wise to live quietly ashore for awhile."

"You must have handled him rather roughly," remarked the Englishman.

"I killed him," said Stanley. "I beat the life out of him with my bare fists."

"You beast," said Hemming, his face blanched with horror and disgust.

"Oh, cheer up, old Sunday-school teacher," replied Stanley, good-naturedly. "I had reason enough for killing the slob. He hit me first, for one thing. Then there was a girl in the case — a little brown girl, who wouldn't look at a dirty brute like him, for all that he told to the contrary. He was ship's bully until he got aft to the cabin."

He emptied his glass, and looked, with an expression of bored expectancy, toward the darkest corner of the room.

"It's about time for him now," he said, "but maybe you don't believe in ghosts. He favours me with a sight of his ugly mug almost every night. Can you see him there?"

Hemming turned with a start, but only black shadows were in the corner. Stanley laughed.

"What a pity," he said, "for I am sure you would be more interested than I."

Hemming drew close to the fire, and, when his back was turned, Stanley, with a wary eye on the shadows, grabbed the decanter of Scotch and gulped down a quantity of the raw liquor. In a moment he seemed himself again. He set the decanter softly back upon the table, and, with his hands in his trousers pockets, moved over to the window and looked out at the cold roofs, level against the dawn, and at the lift of the silent chimneys. His jaws were set hard, swelling the muscles under the swarthy skin. He feared a hand upon his shoulder — the heavy touch of a thick, toil-worn hand. He awaited, dreading, the rank breath of the dead seaman against his ear. Presently he turned his head, and looked again at the shadowy corner. It was lighter now. But crouched there close to the floor, as he had crouched upon the hot deck, with red hands knuckle down, and blood upon the ugly, upturned face, was the bully of the barque. The candles burned softly, throwing their kindly radiance upon books and pictures. Hemming sat by the fire, puzzled, but at peace. Wrenching his gaze from the hideous apparition beyond, Stanley looked enviously at Hemming — at the clean, brave face, whereon hardships and adventures had hardened not a line.

Hemming fell asleep in his chair. When he

opened his eyes, the room was full of sunlight and his guest had gone. He could hear O'Rourke splashing and singing in his bath, and Smith stood at his elbow with a cup of tea.

CHAPTER IV.

"THE DEAR, DEAR WITCHERY OF SONG"

THE two friends sat late over their breakfast.

"If anything happens to me before night, will you see that I am decently buried?" said O'Rourke.

"I don't see what more is to happen to you — except bankruptcy," retorted Hemming.

"Oh, I intend getting down to work again right away," O'Rourke hastened to say. "That is part of my trouble," he added. "You know that Mr. Hudson, for all his good points, has some jolly queer notions in his head. He had not known me more than a week before he asked me to let scribbling alone and give business a chance. I told him that scribbling was good enough for me. He said prose was bad, but to see a bushy chap, six feet high, writing poetry, simply made him sick. I was mad, but — well, I was also afraid. I know him better now. He made me promise not to mention the conversation to Helen, and tried to fire my soul with the desire for banking. He even offered me a job.

Well, to oblige him I determined to try to give up writing, and I've been struggling along now for nearly three weeks. Gad, I'm sick of it. Helen does not know, of course, what the matter is, and thinks I'm out of condition, or that her company is not inspiring; and all the time the finest things are swinging about in my head, and my fingers are itching for a good corky penholder. Last night I realized that both my money and peace of mind were leaving me, so I turned out early this morning and wrote seven verses to Helen, and sketched out two stories, and an article on the Jamaica fruit trade, and now I'm going to tell old Hudson that he can go — I mean that I will not consider his proposition a moment longer."

"And what about the lady?" asked Hemming.

"Who — Helen? Oh, she'll make it warm for her father when she hears about it, I can tell you," answered O'Rourke.

While Hemming interviewed Smith on household topics, O'Rourke scribbled a quatrain on his cuff, and then invented conversation between himself and Mr. Hudson. This form of amusement is exciting — better even than writing dialogue. One cannot help figuring as the hero. The best time for it is when you are walking alone, late at night, perhaps in a rainstorm. The ideas swing along with your stride,

and the words patter with the rain. But O'Rourke, in his mood, found nine o'clock in the morning good enough, and, by the time Hemming was ready to go out, had made sixteen different wrecks of poor Hudson's ideas on the subject of authorship as a profession. His courage returned to its normal elevation, and as they walked along he entertained Hemming with his brave dreams of the future.

The friends parted company at the door of Hemming's publishers; O'Rourke took a car for an uptown resident quarter. He might have seen Mr. Hudson at his office, which was on Broadway, but he wanted to see Helen first, and assure himself of her support.

Helen was pleased, though surprised, at seeing him so early. She received him in the morning-room, which was delightfully informal. He asked her to ride with him at four o'clock, and spoke as if this was his reason for calling. But she thought not. Presently she caught sight of the neat lettering on the otherwise spotless cuff, and without so much as "by your leave" took hold of his wrist, pushed back his coat-sleeve, and read the quatrain.

"My dear boy," she said, "it is fine. And I was just beginning to fear that this old town had made you stupid, or — or that my companionship makes

you dull. I wondered if, after all, I was not inspiring."

"You not inspiring!" exclaimed O'Rourke. "Why, I have had to smother more inspirations during the last few weeks than I ever had before in all my life. There's more inspiration in one of your eyelashes than in all the hair on all the heads of all the other people in the world."

"Silly," she said.

O'Rourke did not retort in words.

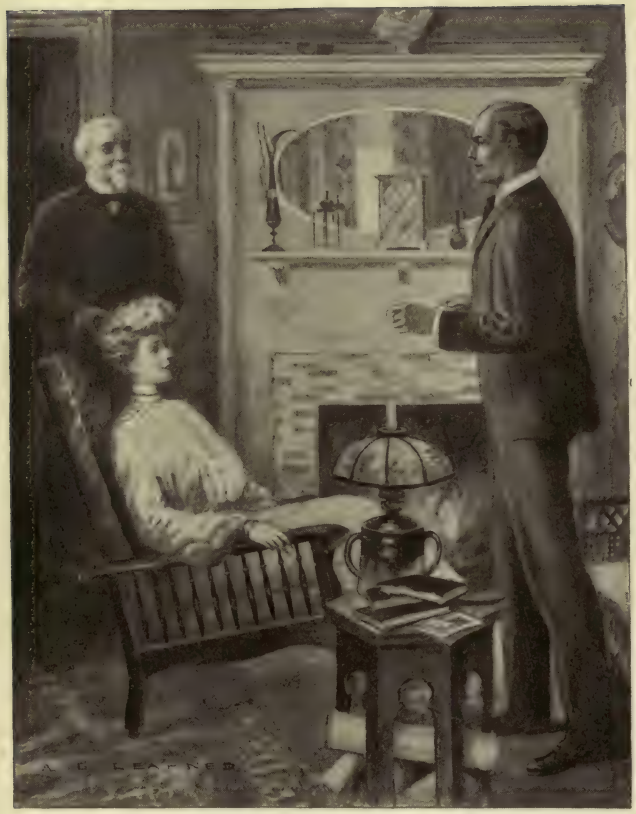
"But why did you smother the inspirations, you boy?" she asked, presently.

"I can't tell you now," he replied. "But at four o'clock I'll confess all. You want the red mare, I suppose. I'm off now to see your pater. Wish me luck, little girl."

Helen smiled.

"I hope you don't let all your cats out of their bags as easily as that," she said. "But it will save you the trouble of making confession later. Yes, the red mare, please. And, dear boy, I'll have a little talk with father at lunch, and he will never make you smother your dear inspirations again. There, that will do. Now run away and beard the lion. Really, you behave as if you were afraid of never finding me again."

"Oh, I've made sure of you this time," he said.



"'I HAVE DECIDED, SIR, TO STICK TO SCRIBBLING'"

Then he remembered the seven verses, and, pulling them from his pocket, read them aloud. The fire in the morning-room was wonderfully cheerful. The clock clicked softly, and chimed once or twice, unheeded. They talked a great deal, and made plans for the future, and O'Rourke smoked a cigarette. When Mr. Hudson came home to his lunch, he found them still engaged in conversation beside the morning-room fire. They looked guiltily at the clock. O'Rourke bowed to Mr. Hudson, and extended his hand.

"I have decided, sir, to stick to scribbling," said he.

"Did you ever think of not sticking to it?" she asked. O'Rourke gazed straight ahead, and had the grace to blush. A truthful woman can always — well, act — with more ease than a truthful man.

"I am not fit for anything else," he said.

"Dear me, dear me," said Hudson, glancing nervously at his daughter. "I haven't a doubt that you are right, Bertram. A man should be the best judge himself of what he is good for."

"And now," said the lady, "you may stay to lunch. But you must hurry away right afterward for the horses."

So O'Rourke remained to lunch, and was vastly entertaining, and Mr. Hudson thawed again, having decided, during the soup, to accept the inevitable.

CHAPTER V.

AN UNCANNY GUEST

HEMMING finished his novel and took it to his publisher. Then he decided to go somewhere, — to get out of New York and back to the life that meant something. He confided his intention to O'Rourke, and later to Smith.

"I wish you'd wait for awhile," pleaded O'Rourke, "and then I'd go with you."

"How long do you want me to wait?" asked Hemming.

"Oh, until we're married."

"Great Scott, man, surely you don't intend deserting your bride immediately after the marriage ceremony!"

"Not much," exclaimed O'Rourke, "but she could come, too."

Hemming stared, for he knew that many of his friend's jokes required a lot of looking at; and Smith, who was tidying the table, hid his smile in the duster.

"What have you been drinking?" inquired Hem-

ming at last. O'Rourke made a movement as one awaking from a trance. He smiled foolishly.

"Forgive me," he said; "for a moment I quite forgot what sort of trips we used to indulge in. Of course it would never do to take Helen on jaunts like those."

"I wonder if you are old enough to take care of a wife," said his friend, severely.

When Hemming returned to his rooms late that evening, he was still undecided as to where he would go. O'Rourke was away at some sort of function. Hemming had been walking for more than an hour, aimlessly, but at a hard pace. As he dropped wearily into his chair, Smith entered, and handed him a paper from the table. It was a note from Stanley, written in red ink on the back of a laundry list. It ran as follows:

"Hurry 'round to my diggings as soon as you get this. I want you to meet my seafaring friend, who seems in a mood to honour me with a visit of some length. He is very droll, and looks as if he means to stay. I send this by our hall boy.

"Merrily yours,

"T. F. Stanley."

He found Stanley alone in a big and lavishly furnished room. He sat at a table, whereon stood two

glasses, a syphon of soda-water, and a decanter. He stood up upon Hemming's entrance. "Ah," he said, "this is good of you. We had almost given up hopes of seeing you to-night."

"I was out," replied Hemming, "and just got your note. Where is your seafaring friend?"

"Allow me to introduce you," said Stanley. "Mr. Kelley, my friend, Mr. Hemming."

Hemming looked about him, open-mouthed, and, though he straightened his monocle, he could see neither hair nor track of Mr. Kelley.

"What is your game?" he inquired, icily.

"It is as I feared," said Stanley, "and I assure you the loss is yours. I alone may enjoy Kelley's delightful society, it appears. His very smile, as he sits there, has a world of humour in it. He tells such droll stories, too, of his adventures by land and sea."

Hemming caught him roughly by the arm. "What damned nonsense is this?" he asked.

Stanley pulled himself away, and the Englishman, fearless though he was, felt daunted by the strange light in his host's eyes.

"If you don't like my friend, why, get out!" cried Stanley. "If you're a snob, and won't drink with a common sailor, and a dead one at that, why, just say so. But I tell you, Hemming, I like him.

I didn't when I killed him, but I love him now. You should hear him sing."

For a moment Hemming stood undecided. Then he removed his overcoat, and drew a chair for himself up to the table.

"I am very stupid to-night," he said, smiling. "Of course I'll have a drink with you and Kelley. Just a couple of fingers, old chap. Kelley seems a good sort. Do you think he will favour us with a song?"

Stanley got another glass, and poured the whiskey for his guest. His face was haggard, though he was clearly pleased with Hemming's change of manner. "Oh, he is a good sort, sure enough," he said, "but I don't believe you could hear him sing. It is all I can do sometimes. He has a fine voice, but he is a bit handicapped by the cut in his lip. Do you notice the cut in his lip? I gave him that years ago. Knocked four or five teeth down his neck, too, I guess. Do you know, Hemming, I was afraid, when you first came in, that you thought me nutty."

For a little while Stanley seemed sunk too deep in meditation for utterance. He looked up presently, but not at Hemming.

"Kelley," he said, "*you* can understand being afraid of a man, and there was a time when *I* was

afraid of a ghost, but what do you think of a man who is afraid of a woman?" He paused for a moment, and seemed to receive an answer, for he laughed and continued, "Just my sentiment, old cock. She isn't after him with a knife, either. She is in love with him, and once he was in love with her, but now he's afraid to go within miles of her. He's in love with her, too; at least, so they told Tarmont."

Hemming jumped from his chair. "Who the devil are you talking about?" he cried.

Stanley glared blankly for a moment.

"Why, sure enough; I'm talking about you," he said.

"See here, Stanley," exclaimed the Englishman, earnestly, "are you drunk, or are you mad, or are you only making a fool of yourself, and trying to make one of me?"

"I am not drunk," replied the other, slowly, "and why should I try to make a fool of you? Some one has saved me that trouble. But I may be mad, old chap, though I haven't taken to biting people yet."

Hemming started, and glanced about him uneasily. "Well, I really must go," he said; "I have some work to do," and he hurried away without shaking hands. He went to the nearest drug-

store, where he might use the public telephone. He was about to ring up a doctor when an amused chuckle at his shoulder arrested him. He turned his head. There stood Stanley, leering pleasantly.

"Don't trouble yourself. I'm not wanting medical advice just now," said Stanley. In his confusion, Hemming blushed guiltily, and left the telephone, and the shop, without a word. As he passed into the street, he heard Stanley laughing with the cashier, very likely explaining his action as that of a harmless idiot.

Hemming made all speed to Washington Square. O'Rourke had not yet returned, but on a scrap of paper among his manuscripts he found Tarmont's address. With the help of a cab, he was soon in that gentleman's studio. But, to his disgust, he found that he was not the only visitor. Half a dozen men were lounging on the wide divans, smoking. Hemming managed to get Tarmont away from the crowd.

"Have you seen Stanley to-day?" he asked.

"Not since last night. Why?"

"He is mad as a hatter. Thinks he is entertaining some dead sailor in his rooms."

"Heavens!" exclaimed the artist.

"He talked rather wildly about several things,"

said Hemming, "and quoted you concerning a girl in England — and me."

"He may have heard me speaking of it," returned Tarmont, defiantly. "He was here last night."

"Why didn't you tell me?" asked the Englishman.

"It was just country-house gossip," replied the artist, "and I hardly thought you would thank me. I imagined you were old enough to know your own business best."

"It was country-house gossip, and now you have made studio gossip of it," said Hemming, tartly.

"I am very sorry," said Tarmont, honestly.

CHAPTER VI.

THE BACHELOR UNCLE TO THE RESCUE

THE years since Hemming's departure had brought little of joy to Molly Travers. At first anger at herself had occupied her mind. Then had come a short-lived anger toward Hemming for not writing or returning. Now she looked at life with a calm heartlessness. When she learned the true story of Penthouse a white fury entered into her, and she knew that there was not a person in the world whom she would now trust, — save Hemming, the man who despised her. Her mother tried to comfort her; tried to reason with her; tried to soothe her with platitudes and eligible suitors. For her pains, the poor woman was snubbed. So were the suitors — at first. But, as the seasons wore around, with no word of love or forgiveness from the man whose love she had tramped on, Miss Travers decided to take her revenge on the world. She took it daintily, and the world hardly knew what

she was about. First, and always, there was Anderson. At first, love for the girl, and loyalty for his friend, struggled hard within him. Love won against loyalty. Then he found that she did not care. He was of a hopeful disposition, and continued to make a fool of himself even to the last, as you shall see. There were others, — a subaltern, a lawyer, the son of a colonial premier, and a baronet. It was always so cleverly done that not one of them could lay the blame on her. Tarmont, the young artist, was the first to understand. He saved himself just in time.

Mrs. Travers was in despair, especially when the baronet rode away. At last it occurred to her that still the memory of Hemming, the adventurer, stood between her daughter and a comfortable settlement in life. Why any one should prefer the memory of a poor man to the reality of a rich one, she really could not see. She was afraid to ask Molly for a solution of the problem (having learned something by experience), so she wrote a note to her brother. Mr. Pollin came promptly, and gave ear to the narration of her troubles with polite concern. When she had made a piteous end of it, he told her that she was fretting herself quite unnecessarily.

"I'll speak to Molly," he said, in a reassuring voice.

"But she does not like being spoken to," complained Mrs. Travers.

"Oh, she is really a sensible girl, and I am not afraid of her," said Mr. Pollin.

"Had I better call her now?" suggested the lady.

"Lord, no!" cried her brother. "I'll see her alone, — some other day."

One morning, Molly received a visit from her bachelor uncle, much to her surprise. What little she knew of her uncle rather attracted her. More than once she had detected signs of thought, even of intellect, in his conversation. Also, she had heard something of his early career and of the articles he had written. She greeted him brightly. He held her hand, and glanced around the depressing drawing-room.

"My dear, this is no place to talk," he said.

"No, not to really talk," she agreed, "but it is not often used for that." Then she looked at him suspiciously. "Are you going to scold me about something, uncle?" she asked.

He laughed, and shook his head.

"Oh, no. I am not as courageous as I look," he replied.

She wondered if this round, trim, elderly gentleman really imagined that he looked so.

"I don't know where else we can go," she said. "Mother is in the morning-room, and the library is being cleaned."

"If you will come for a walk," he said, with a winning hesitancy in his manner.

Molly smiled. "I'll come," she answered, "though I am quite sure you have something very disagreeable to say, otherwise why all this trouble?"

"My dear girl," began Mr. Pollin, "I do not wonder at your suspicion. Really, though, it is without grounds. I simply want to become better acquainted with an interesting and charming niece whom I have hitherto somewhat neglected."

"Then it is a matter of duty," laughed Molly.

"On your part, my dear," replied her uncle, with a gallant bow.

"Then wait a moment," she said, and left the room.

The moment lengthened into twenty minutes, at the end of which time Miss Travers reappeared, gowned for the street.

"By gad, I don't blame the young fools!" muttered Mr. Pollin to himself, as he followed her down the steps. At first their conversation was of trivialities. It soon worked around to books, and Molly found, to her delight and surprise, that

her uncle had not altogether forsaken his first love, to wit, — literature.

"I have cloaked myself with the reputation of a gossip," he told her, "to hide my greater sins of serious reading and amateur scribbling. A literary man must be successful from the most worldly point of view, to be considered with any leniency by his friends. So I keep dark, and enjoy myself and the respect of — of the people we know. When I was younger, I was not so wise."

"I have heard about it," returned Molly, "and I always liked you for it. But I think you were a coward to give it up just as soon as you came in for money."

Mr. Pollin smiled somewhat sadly.

"I was never anything more than a dabbler. That is my only excuse for shunning the muse in public," he replied. "But here we are at the door of my humble habitation."

"I have seen the door before. It looks very nice," remarked Molly.

"On the other side of that door," said Mr. Pollin, standing still and surveying the oak, "are two hundred and odd rare volumes, and three times as many more or less common ones, — also some easy chairs, and a man-servant capable of producing a modest luncheon."

"And cigarettes?" asked Miss Travers.

The gentleman gave her a look of pained inquiry.

"For you, my dear girl?" he queried.

"I have not smoked a cigarette for years," she replied, "but I learned how — oh, long ago."

"I have some excellent cigarettes," rejoined Mr. Pollin, kindly, as he fitted his latch-key in the door.

Molly found that, for a poor bachelor, her uncle lived very comfortably. She really did not see how one man and his valet could use so many rooms. The library was a charming place, walled with shelves of books, and warmed and brightened by a glowing fire. The floor had no carpet, but was thickly strewn with rugs. The chairs were of modern pattern and wicker ware, built for comfort rather than for looks. The big writing-table had books, magazines, and manuscripts scattered over it.

Mr. Pollin rang for his man, who appeared on the instant.

"My niece, Miss Travers, will lunch with me," he said.

"Very good, sir," replied the man, and hesitated at the door.

"Well, Scanlan?" inquired his master.

"General Davidson, sir, — and the lady, sir, — will that be hall?"

"Good Lord!" exclaimed Mr. Pollin, "I'd forgotten the general. You don't mind old Davidson, do you, Molly?"

"I'm sure I do not know. I have never met him," replied Molly.

"That will be all," said Mr. Pollin to the man, and, as soon as the door closed, he turned to Molly and said: "Now, my dear, we have just an hour before that old bore Davidson, with his everlasting plans of battles, gets here, so we had better make the most of our time." He stirred the fire, and then seated himself close to his niece. He looked at her nervously, and several times opened his mouth as if to speak, but always seemed to think better of it before he had made a sound.

"Why, what on earth is the matter?" cried Miss Travers, staring with wide eyes.

Mr. Pollin braced himself, and swallowed hard. "My dear," he said, "I want to confess that I promised your mother that I would speak to you about — about — "

"About what, uncle?" She breathed fast, and her face was anxious.

"Dash it all, about some silly rot!" cried the old gentleman, "and, by gad, I don't intend to mention it. You are quite old enough to look after your own affairs, — of that nature, — and you are

much wiser than the people who wish to look after them for you."

"I know what it is," said Molly, slowly.

"Then don't give it another thought," said Mr. Pollin. He patted her hand gently, and sighed with relief. "Now we can have a cigarette," he said. But his real task was yet to come. He wanted to know, by her own showing, if she still cared for Hemming. How the devil was it to be done, he wondered. He looked at the clock, and saw that the general was not due inside another forty minutes. He looked at Molly. She leaned back in his deepest chair, looking blissfully at home and uncommonly pretty. Her slight, rounded figure was turned sidewise between the padded arms of the chair, while her grave gaze explored the book-shelves. Between two fingers of her right hand she held a fat cigarette, unlighted.

"What a lucky man an uncle is," he murmured.

She wrinkled her eyes at him for a moment, and then laughed softly. "That was very prettily said; but I would much rather you read to me — something that you are very fond of. I'll see if I like it. Perhaps our tastes are a good deal the same, and, if so, you will be able to save me a lot of time and temper by telling me what to read."

"A literary adviser," suggested Mr. Pollin, as

he fumbled through a stack of magazines and papers beside his chair.

"Surely you will not find anything in the magazines," she exclaimed.

In answer, he selected one from the heap, and opened it at a marked page.

"What is it?" she asked.

"'Pedro, the Fisherman,' is the name of it," he replied, and straightway began to read.

It was a simple story of a small, brown boy somewhere at the other side of the world, and yet the beauty, the humble joy, and the humble pathos, made of it a masterpiece, — for the seeing ones. Pollin read it well, with sympathy in his voice and manner, but with no extravagance of expression. When he came to the end (it was a very short story), he got up hurriedly and placed the magazine in his niece's lap.

"I must see how Scanlan is getting along," he said, and left the room.

Molly sat very still, with the magazine face down upon her knee. Her eyes, abrim with tears, saw nothing of the glowing fire toward which they were turned. There was no need for her to look, to see by whom the story was written. Who but her old lover could touch her so with the silent magic of printed words? She forgot, for awhile, the unan-

swered letter and the weary seasons through which she had vainly waited for his forgiveness. Now she saw only the exile, — the wanderer, — and her heart bled for him. He would be wiser than of old, she thought, but still gentle and still fearless. A cynic? — no, he could never be that. Such a heart, though embittered against one woman, would not turn against the whole of God's world. She had thrown aside the love that now read and translated the sufferings and joys of outland camps and cities. The very tenderness that enabled him to understand the men and women of which he wrote had once been all for her.

The magazine slid to the floor, and a loose page, evidently cut from some other periodical, fluttered to one side. Molly sat up and recovered it. Listlessly she turned it over. Here were verses by Hemming. Her tears blotted the lines as she read:

"When the palms are black, and the stars are low, and even the trade-winds sleep,
God, give my longing wings, to span the valleys and hills of the deep!"

And again, —

"The sailor's voyage is a thousand miles, 'bout ship, and a thousand more!
By landfall, pilot, and weed-hung wharf, — to the lass at the cabin door.

"But mine! — fool heart, what a voyage is this, storm-beaten on every sea,
With never the glow of an open door and a lamp on the sill for me?"

When Mr. Pollin returned to the library, he found his niece with her face hidden in the cushions of the chair, weeping quietly. He had half-expected something unusual, but the sight of her grief made him feel like a fool. He picked up the magazine, and replaced it neatly on the top of the pile. Then he noticed the clipping containing Hemming's verses, damp and crumpled, at her feet. That's what did it, he thought, and was about to recover it, too, when his attention was diverted by the sound of wheels at his curb.

"The general," he exclaimed.

Molly sat up quickly, and mopped her eyes. "I think I must have fallen asleep," she said, with her face turned away from her uncle. But he was the more confused of the two.

"Yes, my dear," he said, "but now you must dry your — I mean, wake up, for the general is at the door." He went to the window. With the tail of his eye, he saw Molly stoop, quick as a flash, pluck something from the rug at her feet, and thrust it into the front of her dress. Next moment the general was announced.

The lunch was sent in from the kitchen of a famous restaurant, and was artfully served by Scanlan. During the first part of the meal, the general did little but eat. He had a surprisingly healthy appetite for a retired British soldier of his age and rank. Later he talked, beginning with his little say concerning the War Office. That institution suffered severely.

"Bless my soul! what did they need of a commission to look into the state of affairs?" he fumed. "I could have told them about the rifles years ago. Why, man, I lugged one of the useless things to Newfoundland with me, and first day on the barrens crawled to within sixty yards of a stag, and sniped at him steady as a church, — with my elbow on a rock, mind you. Off walked the stag, so I popped again. At that, he walked a bit farther, and shook his head. My half-breed sniggered. 'Damn you,' I said (there were no ladies there, Miss Travers; I never swear before women and parsons), 'make me a target, and I'll see what's the matter with this blessed shootin'-iron.' Sacobie fixed up a target, and we both blazed at it — turn about — all afternoon. Every bullet went eighteen feet to the left. Gad, if they had only heard me that day, they would have guessed that something was wrong with the sightin' of their precious rifles."

Next, he held forth on military matters in general, even down to rations and uniforms for men in the field. "The matter with our Tommies," he declared, "is that the poor beggars haven't wind enough to march with, tied about as they are with a lot of idiotic straps."

Presently, much to Molly's surprise, he pushed his wine-glasses to one side, and asked for a copy of "Where Might Is Right."

"This chap, Hemming, considering his lack of age, knows a wonderful lot about it," he said, when he got the book in his hand. He fluttered the pages, and soon found a passage that seemed to please him. He straightway read it aloud, in ringing tones and with a grand air.

"I call that inevitable — inevitable," he cried, glaring the while at his host and the lady, as if looking for contradictions.

"It strikes me as remarkably true," agreed Mr. Pollin. Molly said nothing, but something of the inner glow of pride must have shone in her face, for her uncle glanced at her, and smiled knowingly.

The general left shortly after lunch, for he was a man of affairs, — mostly other people's.

"I must go now," said Molly. "Mother will be wondering what you have done with me."

Mr. Pollin took both her hands between his, and pressed them warmly.

"Do you love Bert Hemming?" he asked.

She turned her face away, and did not answer. But he felt her hands tremble in his, and saw the red glow on neck and cheek.

"Bring him back," he said. "If you love him, why ruin your own life as well as his?"

"I wrote to him — long ago — and he — he took no notice," whispered Molly.

"And you never wrote again?" inquired her uncle.

"Why should I? He despises me, — or he would have answered that letter. I — I dragged my heart before him," she sobbed.

Mr. Pollin let go her hands, and slipped one arm around her shoulders.

"My dear little girl," he replied, "letters have been known to go astray, — just as conclusions have." He patted her bowed head with his free hand. "Why, once I lost a letter with a money order in it," he added, seriously.

Molly brushed away her tears. "I must go now," she said, moving away from him. She put up her hands to straighten her hair. Then a sudden thought occurred to her, and she plucked Mr. Pollin's sleeve.

"Uncle, we must both forget about to-day," she said.

"Not I," he replied. "I am going to write — "

He stopped short, spellbound by her sudden change of countenance and manner. Her eyes fairly flamed. Her whole body trembled.

"You would not dare!" she cried. "Oh, you would not dare! Are you, too, nothing but a busybody?"

Poor old Pollin gasped.

"Good Lord! I meant it for the best," he exclaimed, weakly, "but just as you say, my dear."

He took her home, and, by the time her door was reached, her manner toward him had again warmed.

"It was a charming lunch," she said, as they shook hands.

Mr. Pollin sat at his writing-table, and dipped his pen in the ink, only to dot lines on his blotter.

"The girl was right," he said, "I don't dare."

He lit a cigarette, and for several minutes contemplated wreaths of smoke, without moving. Suddenly he leaned forward, took a fresh dip of ink, and scribbled:

"Dear Bert: — You are a fool to stay away, — unless, perhaps, you no longer care for the girl."

Without adding his signature to this offhand communication, he enclosed it in an envelope, and addressed the same to Hemming, care of his New York publishers.

CHAPTER VII.

HEMMING RECEIVES HIS SAILING ORDERS FROM A MASTER NOT TO BE DENIED

STANLEY was taken to a private lunatic asylum, and, for all we know to the contrary, his seafaring friend went along with him. Hemming and Tarmont looked through his papers, and found that his father was living (and living well, too) in Toronto, Canada. He was a judge of the Supreme Court, no less. They wrote to this personage, stating the crazy man's case, and in reply received a letter containing a request to enter the patient at a private asylum, and a substantial check. The judge wrote that he had not seen or heard from his son for seven years, and, though he had always been willing to supply him with money, had been unable to discover his address. He arrived in New York soon after his letter, — a big, kindly man with white hair and red cheeks, and a month later took his son home with him. That was the last Hemming saw or heard of Stanley, — of the man to whom he owed more than he had knowledge of.

O'Rourke's affairs went along merrily. He wrote and sold stories and poems. His name began to appear each month on the cover of a certain widely read magazine. Everything was in line for an early wedding and a career of happiness "for ever after."

One morning, while O'Rourke was hard at work, Hemming, who had gone out immediately after breakfast, returned to their sitting-room and laid a red leather case on his friend's manuscript. O'Rourke completed a flowing sentence, and then straightened up and opened the case. A very fine brier-root pipe was disclosed to his view.

"Where did you steal this?" he inquired.

"It is a present for you," said Hemming, dropping into a chair. O'Rourke put down his pen, and eyed his friend with an air of surprise.

"A present!" he exclaimed. "Why, my dear chap, surely I've been taking anything of yours that I happened to want long enough for you to see that there is no need of this depressing formality."

"But we've been such chums."

"You haven't just found that out, I hope."

Hemming shook his head.

"I'm going away," he explained, "and I suppose it will be without you this time."

"I wouldn't mind going to Staten Island," re-

plied O'Rourke, "but for any farther than that you will have to mark me out."

"I sail for England to-morrow," Hemming informed him.

"Have you been — have you received a letter, or anything of that kind?" inquired his comrade.

"No, but Stanley told me I was a fool not to go back."

"Could have told you that myself."

"Then why didn't you?"

"Thought you knew it."

"I didn't know it, — and I am not sure, even now," retorted Hemming.

"Well, old man," rejoined O'Rourke, "you know her better than I do, so suit yourself. But my advice is the same as Stanley's."

He stared moodily at the Englishman. In fact, he was already lonely for his energetic, steel-true roommate. What days and nights they had seen together! What adventures they had sped, knee to knee! What vigils they had kept by the camp-fires and under the cabin-lamps! And now a girl! — but at that thought his brow cleared.

"I think we have both done with the old pace," he remarked, pensively.

"I wonder," said Hemming.

That night about a dozen men gathered in Tar-

mont's studio. Hemming was the guest of honour. The big room was soon filled with smoke. There were many things to drink and a few things to eat. Songs were sung, and stories told. Hemming tried to make a speech, and O'Rourke had to finish it for him. After that, Tarmont suggested leap-frog.

"Just wait until I do my little stunt," begged Potts. He tuned his banjo, and, to an accompaniment of his own composing, sang the following verses:

"'You may light your lamps to cheer me,
You may tune your harps for me,
But my heart is with my shipmates
Where the lights are on the sea.

"'You may wine me, you may dine me,
You may pledge me to the brim,
But my heart is pledging Charlie,
And you have no thought of him.

"'You may cheer me with your friendship,
As you are gentlemen,
But the friend I want the hand-grip of
Is not within your ken.

"'So keep your praise, and keep your blame,
And save your good red wine,
For though this town be home for you,
It is no home of mine.

"'And when your lights are brightest,
Ah, then, across the glare,
I pledge my friends of yesterday,
And love of otherwhere.'"

The applause was loud and long. They patted the singer on the back, and thumped him on the chest. They gave him three cheers and a drink (which made more than three drinks). O'Rourke shouted for their attention.

"All Potts did was make up the silly tune," he cried. "I wrote the verses — with my little pen."

When Hemming and O'Rourke got back to their rooms, they found a steamer-trunk and a couple of bags packed and strapped, and Smith snug abed. The time was 2.30 A. M. They lit the fire, changed their coats, and drew their chairs to the hearth. O'Rourke placed a decanter and glasses on the corner of the table. They talked a little in murmured, disjointed sentences. Each followed his own thoughts as they harked back to the past and worked into the future. They sipped their Scotch and soda, with meditative eyes on the fire. O'Rourke sighed. "Thank God, Helen likes New York no better than I do," he said.

Hemming looked up and nodded.

"My boy," he said, gravely, "if I ever find you and Helen blinking out such a stupid existence as

the thing some of our friends call life, I'll drop you both."

"No danger of that," laughed O'Rourke, happily.

"Remember the Hickses," warned Hemming.

For long after O'Rourke had turned in, Hemming continued his musings by the sinking fire. Just as the dawn gleamed blue between the curtains, he lit a candle, and unrolled the final proof-sheets of his novel. By the time these were corrected to his satisfaction, the room was flooded with sunshine, and Smith was astir.

CHAPTER VIII.

HEMMING WOULD PUT HIS DREAMS TO THE PROOF

On arriving in London, Hemming went straight to the Portland Hotel. As soon as Smith had unpacked enough of his things to allow him to dress, he chartered a cab and hastened toward his old haunts. It was close upon seven o'clock; the night falling black with an upper fog, and the streets alive with the red and white lights on either hand, and the golden eyes of the hansoms. At his old club in Piccadilly he loitered for awhile on the lookout for familiar faces, and wondering where he could find Anderson. His courage, which had often failed altogether during the voyage — especially in the early mornings — was now at its height. In this brave mood he felt quite sure that all those lonely years had been nothing but a frightful, foolish mistake. He wanted to talk it over with Anderson. His old friend would give him some tips as to how the land lay, and what obstacles to look out for. From a waiter, he learned that

Major Anderson was then in town, and frequented this club, so, leaving a note for him, he went on foot to Piccadilly Circus. At the Trocadero, he found a quiet table, and ordered a quiet dinner. As he waited, he watched the people in the place with happy interest. They came, as he had so often seen them come there before, these men and women in evening dress, laughing and whispering, but now talking of a hundred things to which he was a stranger. The waiters slid about grave and attentive as of old. The women pulled at their gloves, and glanced about them, and more than once Hemming bore, undisturbed, the scrutiny of fair and questioning eyes. But throughout the dinner, he had some difficulty in curbing his impatience. He was keen to put this dream of his to the test; and yet, with the thought of going to her and looking into her eyes for what his heart so valiantly promised him, came always the memory of that last parting. Her injustice had burned deep, but still more painful was the recollection of her brief show of relenting, — for then he had turned away.

Still in a brown study, he sipped his coffee and inhaled his cigarette. Visions from the days of his old happiness came to him, and his hand trembled as it never had in anger or fatigue. He built dreams of the wonderful meeting. Would her eyes lighten

as Helen Hudson's had when O'Rourke returned from his exile?

Some one touched his elbow. He started up, and beheld Anderson.

Though the major said the usual things, and shook hands with extreme cordiality, Hemming noticed a tinge of reserve in the greeting.

"This *is* a surprise," stammered Anderson, examining the tip of his cigar with an exhibition of interest that seemed to the other quite uncalled for.

"You don't think it is loaded, do you?" inquired Hemming, smiling patiently.

"Loaded!" exclaimed the major, with a start; "oh, — the cigar. Ha, ha."

Hemming's smile became strangely fixed, as he surveyed his friend across the little table. Could this be the same old Anderson, he mused; and, if so, why so confoundedly chesty? Could it be that a staff appointment had come his way? He gave up the riddle, and related some of his adventures in Pernamba, and told of the end of Penthouse's misguided career.

"I saw something about the revolution and your heroism in the New York papers," said Anderson, "but there was no mention of Penthouse."

"He called himself Cuddlehead at that time, — and really it was hardly worth while enlightening

the press on that point," replied Hemming. "He was related to Mrs. Travers," he added.

The major moved uneasily in his chair.

"By the way," continued Hemming, with a poor attempt at a casual air, "how are Mrs. Travers and Molly?"

"I believe they are very well," replied his friend.

"See here, Dick," cried the man of adventures, with a vast change of manner, "I must show my hand. Why should I try to bluff you, anyway? Tell me, old chap, do you think I have half a chance?"

The colour faded from the major's ruddy cheeks, and he looked forlorn and pathetic, despite his swagger and size.

"Half a chance," he repeated, vaguely, — "half a chance at what?"

"You used to know well enough," cried the other. "Damn it, are my affairs so soon forgotten?"

"I thought you had forgotten them yourself. It is a long time since you went away, you know," replied Anderson, scarcely above a whisper. Drops of sweat glistened on his face.

"A long time, — yes, I know," murmured Hemming.

Presently he said: "Dick, you have not answered my question."

Anderson cleared his throat, fingered his moustache, and glanced about uneasily. But he made no reply.

"You don't think I have any chance? You think she does not care for me?" questioned Hemming, desperately.

He reached over and gripped his friend's wrist with painful vim. "Tell me the truth, Dick, and never mind my feelings," he cried.

Anderson withdrew his arm with a jerk.

"Can't you see? Are you such a damn fool!" he muttered. "You come along, after you have had your fun, and expect me to produce the joyous bride, — the blushing first-love."

"What the devil is the matter with you?" asked Hemming, aghast.

"So you imagine the world stands still for you, — Mr. Commander-in-Chief? You had better hurry back to your nigger troops, or they'll be having another revolution."

Hemming looked and listened, and could believe neither his eyes nor his ears. Was this the same man who, once upon a time, had been his jolly, kindly friend? The once honest face now looked violent and mean. The once honest voice rang like

a jealous hag's. Hemming stared, and stared, in pained astonishment. Then, by some flutter of his companion's eyelids, understanding came to him.

"Dick," he said, "Dick, I am sorry."

By this time Anderson looked thoroughly ashamed of himself. "For God's sake, Bert, get out and leave me alone," he cried, huskily. "I've been drinking too much, you know."

Without another word, Hemming paid his bill and left the place. Beyond the fact that Anderson was in love with Molly, he did not know what to make of that honest soldier's behaviour. Perhaps Molly loved Anderson, and Anderson was too loyal to his old friend to further his own suit? That would make the mildest man act like a drunken collier.

Hemming had been striding along at a brisk pace, but, when this idea got hold of him, he turned in his tracks and went back to the Trocadero, eager to tell his friend to go ahead and win the happiness in store for him. But when he reached the place, one of the waiters informed him that Major Anderson had gone. He immediately returned to the club. By this time, he had made up his mind to write to Miss Travers, and say good-bye — for ever. On the club stationery he wrote:

"DEAR MOLLY: — My dreams have brought me back to England, and almost to you. But I met Anderson a little while ago, and you will understand why I do not call on you now. It was foolish of me to hope, — but I am afraid I have been a great many kinds of a fool during my aimless life. I intend leaving town in a day or two, and returning to one or other of my distant stamping-grounds. Please think kindly of me, for 'old sake's sake.' I wish you all the happiness life and love can give.

"As ever,

H. H."

He gave the letter to a page, to be immediately posted, and then sat down in a deserted corner and pretended to read. His thoughts were in a turmoil, and his heart ached dully. It seemed to him that fate was pressing him beyond human endurance. His gloomy meditations were interrupted by a genial voice addressing him by his Christian name, and, looking up, he found Mr. Pollin at his elbow.

"You are prompt, my boy," remarked Mr. Pollin.

Hemming frowned. What did the old ass mean by saying he was prompt, he wondered.

"I got to town to-day," he replied, coldly.

Pollin pursed his lips and wrinkled his brow. "Let me see, — ten, eleven, twelve, — why, that

is very quick work. I mailed the note only twelve days ago," he said.

"What note? and what are you talking about?" asked his bewildered hearer.

"The note to you."

"I did not get any note."

"Then what the devil brought you here?"

"That is my own business, sir," retorted Hemming, angrily.

"Easy, easy, Herbert," cried the old man.

"I beg your pardon, sir, for speaking to you like that," replied Hemming, "but I am in a nasty temper to-night, and I really can't make out what you are driving at."

"Granted, my dear boy; granted with a heart and a half," exclaimed Pollin. "But tell me," he asked, "do you mean to say that my note, advising you to come to London, never reached you?"

"That is what I mean to say," Hemming assured him. Suddenly his face brightened, and he leaned forward. "Why did you advise me to come to London?" he asked.

Mr. Pollin surveyed him critically. "We'll just sit down and have a drink," he said, "and then maybe I will tell you."

Hemming's curiosity was sufficiently excited to prompt him to comply with this suggestion. He

wondered what old Pollin could have to say to him, for they had never seen much of each other, nor had they been particularly friendly. But he was Molly's uncle, — there lay the golden possibility. He smothered the thought. More likely, the communication would be something about Anderson's prospects. He smiled grimly, and swallowed half his whiskey at a gulp.

Mr. Pollin settled himself more comfortably in his chair. "I like your work," he began, "and have always followed it carefully. Your Turko-Grecian book strikes me as a particularly fine achievement. What little of your fiction and verse I manage to hunt out in the magazines appeals to me in more ways than one. It is good work. But even better than that, I like the good heart I see behind it. When, a few days ago, Mrs. Travers asked me to protest with her daughter for refusing eligible suitors, I felt it my duty to look into the case, — hers and yours. I did so, and came to the conclusion that she still cares for you more than for any one else. That is my reason for writing you to come home."

"Does she know that you have written to me?" queried Hemming, his face and heart aglow.

"No, indeed, but I'm afraid she may suspect

when she sees you," replied Mr. Pollin, with some show of uneasiness.

"And what about Anderson?" asked Hemming.

"Dick Anderson? Ah, he is exceedingly stupid, or he would have given up long ago. He never had the ghost of a chance," replied the beaming match-maker.

Hemming stood up, and grasped the other warmly by both hands. "I got along without your letter," he said, "but I don't know what might have happened by now if you'd not stumbled over me to-night. I saw Anderson, you know, and somehow got the idea into my head that I was out of the game."

"Out of the game," laughed Pollin. "No fear of that, my boy. Come over to my diggings, and we'll have a smoke on it."

As he led the prodigal from the club, clinging affectionately to his arm, he warned him of Mrs. Travers. "Don't pay any attention to her, — unless she happens to be polite," he said.

Late that night, after Hemming had returned to his hotel, Mr. Pollin sat up and penned a note to his niece.

CHAPTER IX.

TO PART NO MORE

"The eyes that wept for me, a night ago,
Are laughing now that we shall part no more."

It was later than usual when Molly awoke that morning. It seemed to her that the room looked brighter than it had for a long time. The pictures on the walls shone with a hitherto unnoticed glow. She lay still for awhile, recalling the night's dream, piecing the fragments one by one. The dream had been altogether pleasant and unusual. She had been in strange and delightful countries, —

"Where below another sky
Parrot islands anchored lie."

She had seen the palms shake their stiff foliage against the steady winds. She had gone along a white street, gleaming between deep verandas, and Hemming had walked beside her, talking of his adventures and his hopes. She had heard surf-music drifting in from moonlit reefs, and the tin-

kling of mandolins out of alleys of roses. She had gone through a land of sweet enchantment with her lover's hand in hers.

Molly dressed slowly, the spell of her dreaming still upon her, haunting her like a half-remembered voice. At the breakfast-table she found three letters beside her plate.

"You seem to be a woman of affairs, my dear," said Mrs. Travers, eyeing the letters greedily from her end of the table. The dame had finished her breakfast some time before, but, having examined the three envelopes carefully, curiosity about their contents kept her in her place.

When Molly saw Hemming's handwriting, — and on the stationery of a London club at that, — she leaned back, and for the flight of a dozen heart-beats kept her eyes tight shut, and her hands clinched on the arms of the chair.

"My dear, what is the matter?" cried her mother, in tones of surprised concern. She, too, had recognized the writing, however.

"I felt dizzy — just for a moment," answered Molly. Then she opened the letter. She read it again and again, making nothing of it, save that he was in London, had come there to see her, and was going away again. Love of her had brought him, but why should he go away? What had Major

Anderson to do with it? Now her heart pulsed joy through her veins, and now fear, — and they both hurt. Then came the fearful, humiliating question, — could it be that her uncle had sent for him?

"What has that shameless adventurer written to you?" asked Mrs. Travers, purple with curiosity, and with fear that the chances for her daughter to marry a fortune were ruined.

"What shameless adventurer?" cried Molly, looking up with flashing eyes.

"Herbert Hemming."

"How do you know the letter is from Herbert Hemming?"

"I — I happened to notice the handwriting."

"Paul Pry," cried Molly; and with that she burst into tears. Mrs. Travers sailed from the room, much against her inclination, but her dignity demanded it of her. Left to herself, Molly stifled the sobs, brushed the tears from her eyes, and opened the other letters. Her uncle's she read with wonder and delight. It ran thus:

"DEAR NIECE: — Herbert is in town. I ran across him at the club. He was in very low spirits, suspecting something between you and Major Anderson; but I soon cheered him up. Now is my

time to confess that I wrote to H. H. a few days ago. Fortunately he had started for London before receiving the letter (has not seen it yet), so there is nothing for you to get angry at a doting uncle about. He tells me that never a scratch of a pen has he received from you, since the beginning of your misunderstanding. He means to call on you to-morrow, at the informal hour of ten in the morning. His happiness is all in your hands.

"Your loving Uncle."

Anderson's communication, — a hopeless scrawl, in which he said that Hemming was in town, and that he himself was going to France for a little while — only interested her in that it proved to be a key to her lover's message. Presently she glanced up at the clock. "Within half an hour," she cried, softly, and, gathering together her papers, she left the room.

Of course Hemming was twenty minutes ahead of time. Mr. Pollin might have known that, under the circumstances, a lover always allows thirty minutes for a ten-minute cab-drive. Unfortunately, Mr. Pollin, though an estimable man in a hundred ways, did not know everything about a lover. He had very seldom been one himself, even of the mildest type. So when Hemming, short of breath, glori-

ous of visage, and flushing hot and cold, — in fact, with all the worst symptoms of a recruit going into action, — entered the long and formal drawing-room, he was received by Mrs. Travers. This was a long way from what Pollin had led him to expect. He stood aghast; he got a grip on himself, and, bowing low, extended his hand. Mrs. Travers ignored his hand. But, for all her awe-inspiring front, she, too, was agitated. She knew that she was about to play a desperate game. Fever and rum had made the Brazilian colonel's game seem feasible. Conceit, stupidity, and love of money were her excuse for making a fool of herself.

"Mr. Hemming, I believe," she said.

This was too colossal for Hemming. He could not pass that, however eager he might be to get this unexpected interview over with. He lifted one hand close to his face and stared at it intently for several seconds.

"'Pon my word," he said, "I believe you are right. May I ask if you recognized me by my eyeglass or my feet?" His smile was politely inquiring. He looked as if he really wanted to know.

"You will leave this house immediately," cried the lady, as soon as she could command sufficient



"AT THAT MOMENT MOLLY TRIPPED INTO THE ROOM"

breath. "My daughter is very wise in deciding to have nothing to do with you."

This shot told, and his manner changed to one of haggard doubt and dread.

Mrs. Travers saw her advantage, and, knowing that her time was limited, hastened to follow it up. But at that moment Molly tripped into the room. At sound of the light step and whispering of skirts Hemming turned toward the door. The old woman and all her works were forgotten, for Molly's eyes proved the truth of his dreaming. But he did not approach her. She paused on the threshold, not speaking, not smiling, but with the whole dear secret in her radiant face. How long was it — seconds or centuries — that her eyes looked into his across the furniture of that formal room? Presently, with a little catch in her breath, like a sob, she spoke, turning her gaze to Mrs. Travers.

"Mother," she said, "when I tell you that I overheard your last remark, I think you will understand and forgive the anger and — and disdain which I feel toward you."

Mrs. Travers, suddenly grown old and ugly, moved toward the door. She reeled, and nearly fell. Hemming sprang forward, caught her firmly and gently, and helped her to a couch. By this time her great face was dead-white, and her eyelids flutter-

ing. He tore open the neck of her dress, and then ran to the dining-room for water. This he used upon her with a liberal hand, and soon she gasped and opened her eyes. Molly put her arms around her lover's neck.

"What a brute I am," she sobbed; "but — but she called you a shameless adventurer — and she — lied to you."

Mrs. Travers completed her recovery as best she could, without further assistance.

CHAPTER X.

A NEW COMMAND

O'Rourke sent Mr. Pollin's letter back to Hemming, and Molly treasured it, unopened, among her dearest possessions. Mr. Pollin had several serious talks with his sister, but for all the good that came of them he might have saved his breath to blow smoke with. That cantankerous, silly old lady, firmly believing that her daughter had treated her unkindly, refused to have anything more to do with Hemming. Before a few friends as biased or stupid as herself she posed as a Christian martyr. What a pity there were no pagan emperors around, with boiling oil and thumbscrews!

One morning, about three weeks after Hemming's return, he and Molly rode together in Hyde Park. Despite Mrs. Travers, and thanks to Mr. Pollin's library and another friend's saddle-horses, they managed to meet for several hours every day. On this occasion, as they walked their horses shoulder to shoulder, they seemed deep in some great plan.

"I think good old Santosa has had his finger in it," said Hemming. "You see, he married the daughter of the secretary of war not very long ago. Rio is a beautiful place," he continued, "and a general, even of the Brazilian army, is not a person to be lightly treated. Remember that, dear!"

"It will be simply glorious," cried Molly. "But are you quite sure that I have enough clothes, and that there is no immediate danger of a revolution?"

"I should think one gown would be enough for one wedding," he replied, smiling, "and as for a revolution — bah! Brazil is as safe as a nursery these days."

"You must promise me not to give up your writing," she said.

"I could not give it up if I tried. I am under contract for two novels inside the next two years," he answered.

Molly shook her head at that. They touched their nags to a canter, and for a little while rode in silence.

"You took your time to find out," called Molly, presently.

"I am afraid I can't make it any clearer to you," he replied.

Molly drew her horse toward his, and leaned forward in the saddle.

"Dearest boy," she said, "I can't believe that you will ever forget how cruel I was to you, though I know that you forgave me long ago."

"The memory of it is buried somewhere in the Pernamba bush, with the body of Penthouse," he answered, gently.

"But tell me," she began, and paused.

"Anything," he laughed back.

"Did you ever care for Marion Tetson?"

"Not even in those days — when she was really charming."

Several months later, at the house of a mutual friend, Mrs. Travers met General Davidson. The general beamed upon her with marked cordiality.

"I am glad to know that some English people appreciate a good thing," he said.

The rest of the company turned to see what was going on, and the old lady stared.

"I am speaking of your distinguished son-in-law, Herbert Hemming," continued the general, in a dress-parade voice, "and I assure you, madam, that when he took command of the military district of Rio Janeiro, England lost a valuable man. It is a crying shame," he added, glaring around, "that the English government had not Mrs. Travers's discernment."

The dame mumbled a meaningless reply. A curate sniggered behind his hand. Later Mrs. Travers cornered her hostess.

"Why didn't the ungrateful girl tell me?" she asked.

"Tell you what, my dear?"

"About that Rio Janeiro military district."

"You should have read the papers, my dear," replied her hostess, coldly; "then, perhaps, you would not have made yourself so ridiculous."

THE END.

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